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WASHINGTON IRVING.

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VOL. IV.

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New York:
G. P. PUTNAM & CO., 321 BROADWAY.
1857.

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THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS;

WITH WHICH ARE ADDED THOSE OF

HIS COMPANIONS.

LESTER ATHENÆUM
BOOKS LD
By Order of the Trustees
JAN. 1881.
WM. A. HAYES, PRES.

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING.

Venient annis
Sæcula seris, quibus, Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens
Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos
Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris
Ultima Thule.

SENECA: *Medea.*

AUTHOR'S REVISED EDITION.

VOL. II.

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1857.

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Gift of
John [illegible] Hay,
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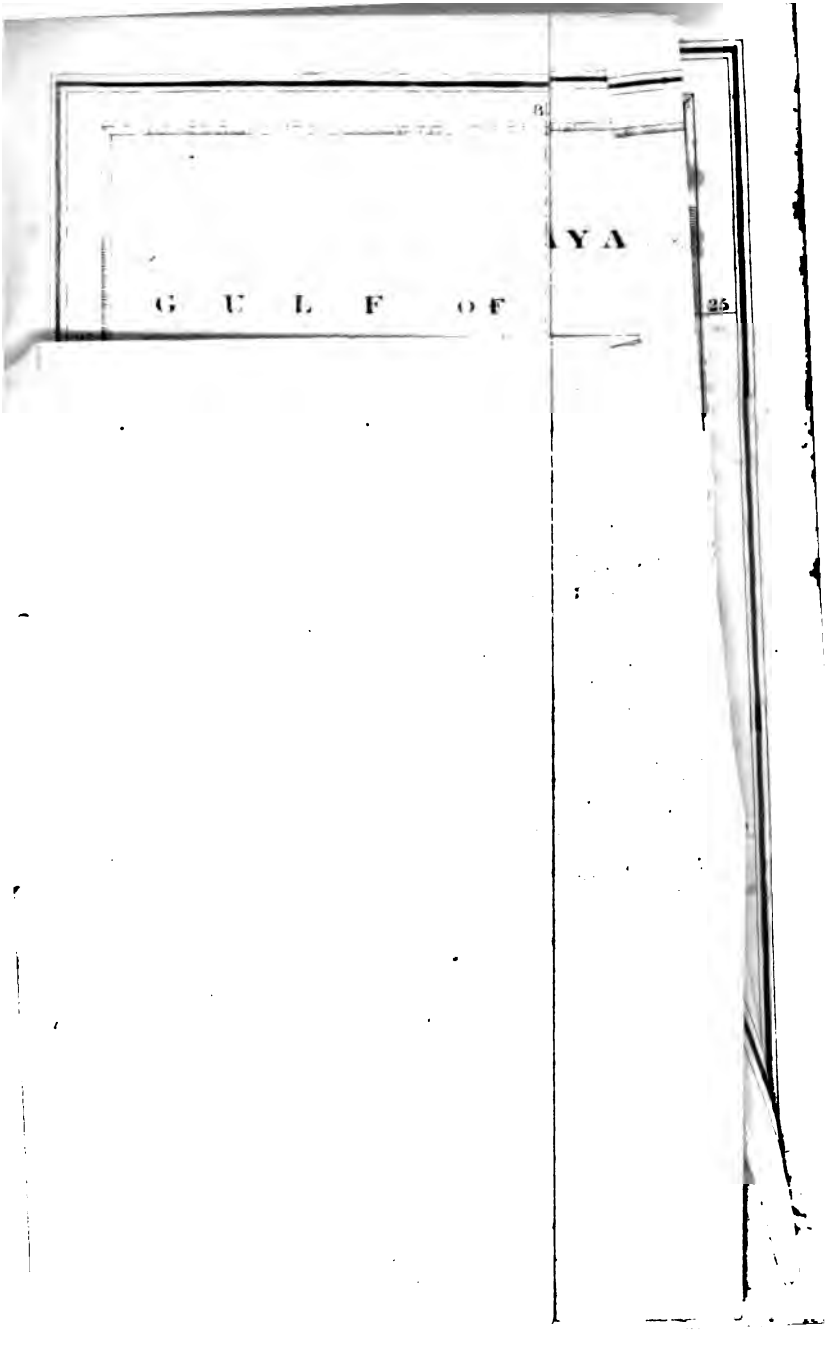
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THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

COLUMBUS.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL OF THE ADMIRAL AT ISABELLA.—CHARACTER OF BARTHOLOMEW COLUMBUS.

[1494. Sept. 4.]

THE sight of the little squadron of Columbus standing once more into the harbor, was hailed with joy by such of the inhabitants of Isabella as remained faithful to him. The long time that had elapsed since his departure on this adventurous voyage, without any tidings arriving from him, had given rise to the most serious apprehensions for his safety; and it began to be feared that he had fallen a victim to his enterprising spirit in some remote part of these unknown seas.

A joyful and heartfelt surprise awaited the admiral on his arrival, in finding at his bedside his brother Bartholomew, the companion of his youth, his confidential coadjutor, and in a manner his second self, from whom he had been separated for several

years. It will be recollected, that about the time of the admiral's departure from Portugal, he had commissioned Bartholomew to repair to England, and propose his project of discovery to King Henry VII. Of this application to the English court no precise particulars are known. Fernando Columbus states that his uncle, in the course of his voyage, was captured and plundered by a corsair, and reduced to such poverty, that he had for a long time to struggle for a mere subsistence by making sea-charts; so that some years elapsed before he made his application to the English monarch. Las Casas thinks that he did not immediately proceed to England, having found a memorandum in his handwriting, by which it would appear that he accompanied Bartholomew Diaz in 1486, in his voyage along the coast of Africa, in the service of the king of Portugal, in the course of which voyage was discovered the Cape of Good Hope.*

* The memorandum cited by Las Casas (Hist. Ind. lib. i. cap. 7) is curious, though not conclusive. He says that he found it in an old book belonging to Christopher Columbus, containing the works of Pedro de Aliaco. It was written in the margin of a treatise on the form of the globe, in the handwriting of Bartholomew Columbus, which was well known to Las Casas, as he had many of his letters in his possession. The memorandum was in a barbarous mixture of Latin and Spanish, and to the following effect.

In the year 1488, in December, arrived at Lisbon Bartholomew Diaz, captain of three caravels, which the king of Portugal sent to discover Guinea, and brought accounts that he had discovered six hundred leagues of territory, four hundred and fifty to the south and one hundred and fifty north, to a cape, named by him the Cape of Good Hope; and that by the astrolabe he found the cape 45 degrees beyond the equinoctial line. This cape was 3100 leagues distant from Lisbon the which the said captain says he set down, league by league, in a chart of navigation presented by him to the king of Portugal; in all which, adds the writer, I was present (in quibus omnibus interfui).

It is but justice to the memory of Henry VII to say, that when the proposition was eventually made to him, it met with a more ready attention than from any other sovereign. An agreement was actually made with Bartholomew for the prosecution of the enterprise, and the latter departed for Spain in search of his

Las Casas expresses a doubt whether Bartholomew wrote this note for himself, or on the part of his brother, but infers that one, or both, were in this expedition. The inference may be correct with respect to Bartholomew, but Christopher, at the time specified, was at the Spanish court.

Las Casas accounts for a difference in date between the foregoing memorandum and the chronicles of the voyage; the former making the return of Diaz in the year '88, the latter '87. This he observes might be because some begin to count the year after Christmas, others at the first of January: and the expedition sailed about the end of August '86, and returned in December '87, after an absence of seventeen months.

NOTE.—Since publishing the first edition of this work, the author being in Seville, and making researches in the Bibliotheca Columbina, the library given by Fernando Columbus to the cathedral of that city, he came accidentally upon the above-mentioned copy of the work of Pedro Aliaco. He ascertained it to be the same by finding the above-cited memorandum written on the margin, at the eighth chapter of the tract called "Imago Mundi." It is an old volume in folio, bound in parchment, published soon after the invention of printing, containing a collection in Latin of astronomical and cosmographical tracts of Pedro (or Peter) de Aliaco, archbishop of Cambray and cardinal, and of his disciple, John Gerson. Pedro de Aliaco was born in 1340, and died, according to some in 1416, according to others in 1425. He was the author of many works, and one of the most learned and scientific men of his day. Las Casas is of opinion that his writings had more effect in stimulating Columbus to his enterprise than those of any other author. "His work was so familiar to Columbus, that he had filled its whole margin with Latin notes in his handwriting; citing many things which he had read and gathered elsewhere. This book, which was very old," continues Las Casas, "I had many times in my hands; and I drew some things from it, written in Latin by the said admiral

brother. On reaching Paris, he first received the joyful intelligence that the discovery was already made; that his brother had returned to Spain in triumph; and was actually at the Spanish court, honored by the sovereigns, caressed by the nobility, and idolized by the people. The glory of Columbus already shed its rays upon his family, and Bartholomew found himself immediately a person of importance. He was noticed by the French monarch, Charles VIII, who, understanding that he was low in purse, furnished him with one hundred crowns to defray the expenses of his journey to Spain. He reached Seville just as his brother had departed on his second voyage. Bartholomew immediately repaired to the court, then at Valladolid, taking with him his two nephews, Diego and Fernando, who were to serve in

Christopher Columbus, to verify certain points appertaining to his history, of which I before was in doubt." (Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 11.)

It was a great satisfaction to the author, therefore, to discover this identical volume, this *Vade Mecum* of Columbus, in a state of good preservation. [It is in the cathedral library, E——G, Tab. 178, No. 21.] The notes and citations mentioned by Las Casas are in Latin, with many abbreviations, written in a very small, but neat and distinct hand, and run throughout the volume; calling attention to the most striking passages, or to those which bear most upon the theories of Columbus; occasionally containing brief comments or citing the opinions of other authors, ancient and modern, either in support or contradiction of the text. The memorandum particularly cited by Las Casas, mentioning the voyage of Bartholomew Diaz to the Cape of Good Hope, is to disprove an opinion in the text, that the torrid zone was uninhabitable. This volume is a most curious and interesting document, the only one that remains of Columbus prior to his discovery. It illustrates his researches and in a manner the current of his thoughts, while as yet his great enterprise existed but in idea, and while he was seeking means to convince the world of its practicability. It will be found also to contain the grounds of many of his opinions and speculations on a variety of subjects.

quality of pages to Prince Juan.* He was received with distinguished favor by the sovereigns; who, finding him to be an able and accomplished navigator, gave him the command of three ships freighted with supplies for the colony, and sent him to aid his brother in his enterprises. He had again arrived too late; reaching Isabella just after the departure of the admiral for the coast of Cuba.

The sight of this brother was an inexpressible relief to Columbus, overwhelmed as he was by cares, and surrounded by strangers. His chief dependence for sympathy and assistance had hitherto been on his brother Don Diego; but his mild and peaceable disposition rendered him little capable of managing the concerns of a factious colony. Bartholomew was of a different and more efficient character. He was prompt, active, decided, and of a fearless spirit; whatever he determined, he carried into instant execution, without regard to difficulty or danger. His person corresponded to his mind; it was tall, muscular, vigorous, and commanding. He had an air of great authority, but somewhat stern, wanting that sweetness and benignity which tempered the authoritative demeanor of the admiral. Indeed, there was a certain asperity in his temper, and a dryness and abruptness in his manners, which made him many enemies; yet notwithstanding these external defects, he was of a generous disposition, free from all arrogance or malevolence, and as placable as he was brave.

He was a thorough seaman, understanding both the theory and practice of his profession; having been formed, in a great measure, under the eye of the admiral, and being but little inferior to him in science. He was superior to him in the exercise

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60.

of the pen, according to Las Casas, who had letters and manuscripts of both in his possession. He was acquainted with Latin, but does not appear to have been highly educated; his knowledge, like that of his brother, being chiefly derived from a long course of varied experience and attentive observation. Equally vigorous and penetrating in intellect with the admiral, but less enthusiastic in spirit and soaring in imagination, and with less simplicity of heart, he surpassed him in the subtle and adroit management of business, was more attentive to his interests, and had more of that worldly wisdom which is so important in the ordinary concerns of life. His genius might never have enkindled him to the sublime speculation which ended in the discovery of a world, but his practical sagacity was calculated to turn that discovery to advantage. Such is the description of Bartholomew Columbus, as furnished by the venerable Las Casas from personal observation;* and it will be found to accord with his actions throughout the remaining history of the admiral, in the events of which he takes a conspicuous part.

Anxious to relieve himself from the pressure of public business, which weighed heavily upon him during his present malady, Columbus immediately invested his brother Bartholomew with the title and authority of Adelantado, an office equivalent to that of lieutenant-governor. He considered himself entitled to do so from the articles of his arrangement with the sovereigns, but it was looked upon by King Ferdinand as an undue assumption of power, and gave great offence to that jealous monarch, who was exceedingly tenacious of the prerogatives of the crown, and considered dignities of this rank and importance as only to be conferred by royal mandate.† Columbus, however, was not actuated

* Las Casas Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 29. † Ibid, cap. 101.

in this appointment by a mere desire to aggrandize his family. He felt the importance of his brother's assistance in the present critical state of the colony, but that this co-operation would be inefficient unless it bore the stamp of high official authority. In fact, during the few months that he had been absent, the whole island had become a scene of discord and violence, in consequence of the neglect, or rather the flagrant violation, of those rules which he had prescribed for the maintenance of its tranquillity. A brief retrospect of the recent affairs of the colony is here necessary to explain their present confusion. It will exhibit one of the many instances in which Columbus was doomed to reap the fruits of the evil seed sown by his adversaries.

CHAPTER II.

MISCONDUCT OF DON PEDRO MARGARITE, AND HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE ISLAND.

[1494.]

It will be recollected, that before departing on his voyage, Columbus had given the command of the army to Don Pedro Margarite, with orders to make a military tour of the island, awing the natives by a display of military force, but conciliating their good-will by equitable and amicable treatment.

The island was at this time divided into five domains, each governed by a cacique, of absolute and hereditary power, to whom a great number of inferior caciques yielded tributary allegiance. The first or most important domain comprised the middle part of the royal Vega. It was a rich, lovely country, partly cultivated after the imperfect manner of the natives, partly covered with noble forests, studded with Indian towns, and watered by numerous rivers, many of which, rolling down from the mountains of Cibao, on its southern frontier, had gold-dust mingled with their sands. The name of the cacique was Guarionex, whose ancestors had long ruled over the province.

The second, called Marien, was under the sway of Guacanagari, on whose coast Columbus had been wrecked in his first voy-

age. It was a large and fertile territory, extending along the northern coast from Cape St. Nicholas at the western extremity of the Island, to the great river Yagui, afterwards called Monte Christi, and including the northern part of the royal Vega, since called the plain of Cape François, now Cape Haytien.

The third bore the name of Maguana. It extended along the southern coast from the river Ozema to the lakes, and comprised the chief part of the centre of the island lying along the southern face of the mountains of Cibao, the mineral district of Hayti. It was under the dominion of the Carib cacique Caonabo, the most fierce and puissant of the savage chieftains, and the inveterate enemy of the white men.

The fourth took its name from Xaragua, a large lake, and was the most populous and extensive of all. It comprised the whole western coast, including the long promontory of Cape Tiburon, and extended for a considerable distance along the southern side of the island. The inhabitants were finely formed, had a noble air, a more agreeable elocution, and more soft and graceful manners than the natives of the other parts of the island. The sovereign was named Behechio; his sister, Anacaona, celebrated throughout the island for her beauty, was the favorite wife of the neighboring cacique Caonabo.

The fifth domain was Higuey, and occupied the whole eastern part of the island, being bounded on the north by the Bay of Samana and part of the river Yuna, and on the west by the Ozema. The inhabitants were the most active and warlike people of the island, having learnt the use of the bow and arrow from the Caribs, who made frequent descents upon their coasts; they were said also to make use of poisoned weapons. Their bravery, however, was but comparative, and was found eventually of little

avail against the terror of European arms. They were governed by a cacique named Cotubanama.*

Such were the five territorial divisions of the island at the time of its discovery. The amount of its population has never been clearly ascertained; some have stated it at a million of souls, though this is considered an exaggeration. It must, however, have been very numerous, and sufficient, in case of any general hostility, to endanger the safety of a handful of Europeans. Columbus trusted for safety partly to the awe inspired by the weapons and horses of the Spaniards, and the idea of their superhuman nature, but chiefly to the measures he had taken to conciliate the good-will of the Indians by gentle and beneficent treatment.

Margarite set forth on his expedition with the greater part of the forces, leaving Alonzo de Ojeda in command of the fortress of St. Thomas. Instead, however, of commencing by exploring the rough mountains of Cibao, as he had been commanded, he descended into the fertile region of the Vega. Here he lingered among the populous and hospitable Indian villages, forgetful of the object of his command, and of the instructions left him by the admiral. A commander who lapses from duty himself, is little calculated to enforce discipline. The sensual indulgences of Margarite were imitated by his followers, and his army soon became little better than a crew of riotous marauders. The Indians, for a time, supplied them with provisions with their wonted hospitality, but the scanty stores of those abstemious yet improvident people were soon exhausted by the Spaniards; one of whom they declared would consume more in a day than would support an Indian for a month. If provisions were withheld, or scantily fur-

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib. i. p. 69.

nished, they were taken with violence; nor was any compensation given to the natives, nor means taken to soothe their irritation. The avidity for gold also led to a thousand acts of injustice and oppression; but above all the Spaniards outraged the dearest feelings of the natives, by their licentious conduct with respect to the women. In fact, instead of guests, they soon assumed the tone of imperious masters; instead of enlightened benefactors, they became sordid and sensual oppressors.

Tidings of these excesses, and of the disgust and impatience they were awakening among the natives, soon reached Don Diego Columbus. With the concurrence of the council, he wrote to Margarite reprehending his conduct, and requesting him to proceed on the military tour, according to the commands of the admiral. The pride of Margarite took fire at this reproof; he considered, or rather pretended to consider himself independent in his command, and above all responsibility to the council for his conduct. Being of an ancient family, also, and a favorite of the king, he affected to look down with contempt upon the newly-coined nobility of Diego Columbus. His letters, in reply to the orders of the president and council, were couched in a tone either of haughty contumely or of military defiance. He continued with his followers quartered in the Vega, persisting in a course of outrages and oppressions fatal to the tranquillity of the island.

He was supported in his arrogant defiance of authority by the cavaliers and adventurers of noble birth who were in the colony, and who had been deeply wounded in the proud punctilio so jealously guarded by a Spaniard. They could not forget nor forgive the stern equity exercised by the admiral in a time of emergency, in making them submit to the privations and share the labors of the vulgar. Still less could they brook the authority of

his brother Diego, destitute of his high personal claims to distinction. They formed, therefore, a kind of aristocratical faction in the colony; affecting to consider Columbus and his family as mere mercenary and upstart foreigners, building up their own fortunes at the expense of the toils and sufferings of the community, and the degradation of Spanish hidalgos and cavaliers.

In addition to these partisans, Margarite had a powerful ally in his fellow-countryman, Friar Boyle, the head of the religious fraternity, one of the members of the council, and apostolical vicar of the New World. It is not easy to ascertain the original cause of the hostility of this holy friar to the admiral, who was never wanting in respect to the clergy. Various altercations, however, had taken place between them. Some say that the friar interfered in respect to the strict measures deemed necessary by the admiral for the security of the colony; others that he resented the fancied indignity offered to himself and his household, in putting them on the same short allowance with the common people. He appears, however, to have been generally disappointed and disgusted with the sphere of action afforded by the colony, and to have looked back with regret to the Old World. He had none of that enthusiastic zeal and persevering self-devotion, which induced so many of the Spanish missionaries to brave all the hardships and privations of the New World, in the hope of converting its pagan inhabitants.

Encouraged and fortified by such powerful partisans, Margarite really began to consider himself above the temporary authorities of the island. Whenever he came to Isabella, he took no notice of Don Diego Columbus, nor paid any respect to the council, but acted as if he had paramount command. He formed a cabal of most of those who were disaffected to Columbus, and

discontented with their abode in the colony. Among these the leading agitator was Friar Boyle. It was concerted among them to take possession of the ships which had brought out Don Bartholomew Columbus, and to return in them to Spain. Both Margarite and Boyle possessed the favor of the king, and they deemed it would be an easy matter to justify their abandonment of their military and religious commands by a pretended zeal for the public good; hurrying home to represent the disastrous state of the country, through the tyranny and oppression of its rulers. Some have ascribed the abrupt departure of Margarite to his fear of a severe military investigation of his conduct on the return of the admiral; others to his having, in the course of his licentious amours, contracted a malady at that time new and unknown, and which he attributed to the climate, and hoped to cure by medical assistance in Spain. Whatever may have been the cause, his measures were taken with great precipitancy, without any consultation of the proper authorities, or any regard to the consequences of his departure. Accompanied by a band of malcontents, he and Friar Boyle took possession of some ships in the harbor, and set sail for Spain; the first general and apostle of the New World thus setting the flagrant example of unauthorized abandonment of their posts.

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLES WITH THE NATIVES.—ALONZO DE OJEDA BESIEGED BY CAONABO.

[1494.]

The departure of Pedro Margarite left the army without a head, and put an end to what little restraint or discipline remained. There is no rabble so licentious as soldiery left to their own direction in a defenceless country. They now roved about in bands, or singly, according to their caprice, scattering themselves among the Indian villages, and indulging in all kinds of excesses, either as prompted by avarice or sensuality. The natives, indignant at having their hospitality thus requited, refused any longer to furnish them with food. In a little while the Spaniards began to experience the pressure of hunger, and seized upon provisions wherever they could be found, accompanying these seizures with acts of wanton violence. At length, by a series of flagrant outrages, the gentle and pacific nature of this people was roused to resentment, and from confiding and hospitable hosts, they were converted into vindictive enemies. All the precautions enjoined by Columbus having been neglected, the evils he had apprehended came to pass. Though the Indians, naturally timid, dared not contend with the Spaniards while they kept up any combined and

disciplined force, yet they took sanguinary vengeance on them whenever they met with small parties or scattered individuals, roving about in quest of food. Encouraged by these petty triumphs, and the impunity which seemed to attend them, their hostilities grew more and more alarming. Guatiguana, cacique of a large town on the banks of the Grand River, in the dominions of Guarionex, sovereign of the Vega, put to death ten Spaniards, who had quartered themselves in his town, and outraged the inhabitants by their licentiousness. He followed up this massacre by setting fire to a house in which forty-six Spaniards were lodged.* Flushed by this success, he threatened to attack a small fortress called Magdalena, which had recently been built in his neighborhood in the Vega; so that the commander, Luis de Arriaga, having but a feeble garrison, was obliged to remain shut up within its walls until relief should arrive from Isabella.

The most formidable enemy of the Spaniards, however, was Caonabo, the Carib cacique of Maguana. With natural talents for war, and intelligence superior to the ordinary range of savage intellect, he had a proud and daring spirit to urge him on, three valiant brothers to assist him, and a numerous tribe at his command.† He had always felt jealous of the intrusion of the white men into the island; but particularly exasperated by the establishment of the fortress of St. Thomas, erected in the very centre of his dominions. As long as the army lay within call in the Vega, he was deterred from any attack; but when, on the departure of Margarite, it became dismembered and dispersed, the time for striking a signal blow seemed arrived. The fortress remained isolated, with a garrison of only fifty men. By a sudden and

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 16. † Ibid.

secret movement, he might overwhelm it with his forces, and repeat the horrors which he had wreaked upon La Navidad.

The wily cacique, however, had a different kind of enemy to deal with in the commander of St. Thomas. Alonzo de Ojeda had been schooled in Moorish warfare. He was versed in all kinds of feints, stratagems, lurking ambuscades, and wild assaults. No man was more fitted, therefore, to cope with Indian warriors. He had a headlong courage, arising partly from the natural heat and violence of his disposition, and, in a great measure, from religious superstition. He had been engaged in wars with Moors and Indians, in public battles and private combats, in fights, feuds, and encounters of all kinds, to which he had been prompted by a rash and fiery spirit, and a love of adventure; yet he had never been wounded, nor lost a drop of blood. He began to doubt whether any weapon had power to harm him, and to consider himself under the special protection of the holy Virgin. As a kind of religious talisman, he had a small Flemish painting of the Virgin, given him by his patron, Fonseca, bishop of Badajoz. This he constantly carried with him, in city, camp, or field, making it the object of his frequent orisons and invocations. In garrison or encampment, it was suspended in his chamber or his tent; in his rough expeditions in the wilderness, he carried it in his knapsack, and whenever leisure permitted, would take it out, fix it against a tree, and address his prayers to this military patroness.* In a word, he swore by the Virgin, he invoked the Virgin whether in brawl or battle, and under the favor of the Virgin he was ready for any enterprise or adventure. Such was this Alonzo de Ojeda; bigoted in his devotion, reckless in his life, fearless in his spirit,

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. viii. cap. 4. Pizarro Varonese Illustres, cap. 8.

like many of the roving Spanish cavaliers of those days. Though small in size, he was a prodigy of strength and prowess; and the chroniclers of the early discoveries relate marvels of his valor and exploits.

Having reconnoitred the fortress, Caonabo assembled ten thousand warriors, armed with war clubs, bows and arrows, and lances hardened in the fire; and making his way secretly through the forests, came suddenly in the neighborhood, expecting to surprise the garrison in a state of careless security. He found Ojeda's forces, however, drawn up warily within his tower, which, being built upon an almost insulated height, with a river nearly surrounding it, and the remaining space traversed by a deep ditch, set at defiance an attack by naked warriors.

Foiled in his attempt, Caonabo now hoped to reduce it by famine. For this purpose, he distributed his warriors through the adjacent forests; and waylaid every pass, so as to intercept any supplies brought by the natives, and to cut off any foraging party from the fortress. This siege, or investment, lasted for thirty days,* and reduced the garrison to great distress. There is a traditional anecdote, which Oviedo relates of Pedro Margarite, the former commander of this fortress, but which may with more probability be ascribed to Alonzo de Ojeda, as having occurred during this siege. At a time when the garrison was sore pressed by famine, an Indian gained access to the fort, bringing a couple of wood-pigeons for the table of the commander. The latter was in an apartment of the tower surrounded by several of his officers. Seeing them regard the birds with the wistful eyes of famishing men, "It is a pity," said he, "that here is not enough to give us all a meal; I cannot consent to feast while the

* P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv.

rest of you are starving:" so saying, he turned loose the pigeons from a window of the tower.

During the siege, Ojeda displayed the greatest activity of spirit and fertility of resource. He baffled all the arts of the Carib chieftain, concerting stratagems of various kinds to relieve the garrison and annoy the foe. He sallied forth whenever the enemy appeared in any force, leading the van with that headlong valor for which he was noted; making great slaughter with his single arm, and, as usual, escaping unhurt from amidst showers of darts and arrows.

Caonabo saw many of his bravest warriors slain. His forces were diminishing, for the Indians, unused to any protracted operations of war, grew weary of this siege, and returned daily in numbers to their homes. He gave up all further attempt, therefore, on the fortress, and retired, filled with admiration of the prowess and achievements of Ojeda.*

The restless chieftain was not discouraged by the failure of this enterprise, but meditated schemes of a bolder and more extensive nature. Prowling in secret in the vicinity of Isabella, he noted the enfeebled state of the settlement.† Many of the inhabitants were suffering under various maladies, and most of the men capable of bearing arms were distributed about the country. He now conceived the project of a general league among the caciques, to surprise and overwhelm the settlement, and massacre the Spaniards wherever they could be found. This handful of intruders once exterminated, he trusted the island would be delivered from all further molestation of the kind; little dreaming of the hopeless nature of the contest, and that where the

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, lib. iii. cap. 1.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60.

civilized man once plants his foot, the power of the savage is gone for ever.

Reports of the profligate conduct of the Spaniards had spread throughout the island, and inspired hatred and hostility even among tribes who had never beheld them, nor suffered from their misdeeds. Caonabo found three of the sovereign caciques inclined to co-operate with him, though impressed with deep awe of the supernatural power of the Spaniards, and of their terrific arms and animals. The league, however, met with unexpected opposition in the fifth cacique, Guacanagari, the sovereign of Marien. His conduct in this time of danger completely manifested the injustice of the suspicions which had been entertained of him by the Spaniards. He refused to join the other caciques with his forces, or to violate those laws of hospitality by which he had considered himself bound to protect and aid the white men, ever since they had been shipwrecked on his coast. He remained quietly in his dominions, entertaining at his own expense a hundred of the suffering soldiery, and supplying all their wants with his accustomed generosity. This conduct drew upon him the odium and hostility of his fellow caciques, particularly of the fierce Carib, Caonabo, and his brother-in-law, Behechio. They made irruptions into his territories, and inflicted on him various injuries and indignities. Behechio killed one of his wives, and Caonabo carried another away captive.* Nothing, however, could shake the devotion of Guacanagari to the Spaniards; and as his dominions lay immediately adjacent to the settlement, and those of some of the other caciques were very remote, the want of his co-operation impeded for some time the hostile designs of his confederates.†

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60. † Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 16.

Such was the critical state to which the affairs of the colony had been reduced, and such the bitter hostility engendered among the people of the island, during the absence of Columbus, and merely in consequence of violating all his regulations. Margarite and Friar Boyle had hastened to Spain to make false representations of the miseries of the island. Had they remained faithfully at their posts, and discharged zealously the trust confided to them, those miseries might have been easily remedied, if not entirely prevented.

CHAPTER IV.

MEASURES OF COLUMBUS TO RESTORE THE QUIET OF THE ISLAND.—EXPEDITION OF OJEDA TO SURPRISE CAONABO.

[1494.]

IMMEDIATELY after the return of Columbus from Cuba, while he was yet confined to his bed by indisposition, he was gratified by a voluntary visit from Guacanagari, who manifested the greatest concern at his illness, for he appears to have always entertained an affectionate reverence for the admiral. He again spoke with tears of the massacre of Fort Nativity, dwelling on the exertions he had made in defence of the Spaniards. He now informed Columbus of the secret league forming among the caciques; of his opposition to it, and the consequent persecution he had suffered; of the murder of one of his wives, and the capture of another. He urged the admiral to be on his guard against the designs of Caonabo, and offered to lead his subjects to the field, to fight by the side of the Spaniards, as well out of friendship for them, as in revenge of his own injuries.*

Columbus had always retained a deep sense of the ancient kindness of Guacanagari, and was rejoiced to have all suspicion of his good faith thus effectually dispelled. Their former amicable intercourse was renewed, with this difference, that the man

* Herrera, Hist. Ind, decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 16.

whom Guacanagari had once relieved and succored as a shipwrecked stranger, had suddenly become the arbiter of the fate of himself and all his countrymen.

The manner in which this peaceful island had been exasperated and embroiled by the licentious conduct of the Europeans, was a matter of deep concern to Columbus. He saw all his plans of deriving an immediate revenue to the sovereigns completely impeded. To restore the island to tranquillity required skillful management. His forces were but small, and the awe in which the natives had stood of the white men, as supernatural beings, had been in some degree dispelled. He was too ill to take a personal share in any warlike enterprise: his brother Diego was not of a military character, and Bartholomew was yet a stranger among the Spaniards, and regarded by the leading men with jealousy. Still Columbus considered the threatened combination of the caciques as but imperfectly formed; he trusted to their want of skill and experience in warfare, and conceived that by prompt measures, by proceeding in detail, punishing some, conciliating others, and uniting force, gentleness, and stratagem, he might succeed in dispelling the threatened storm.

His first care was to send a body of armed men to the relief of Fort Magdalena, menaced with destruction by Guatiguana, the cacique of the Grand River, who had massacred the Spaniards quartered in his town. Having relieved the fortress, the troops overran the territory of Guatiguana, killing many of his warriors, and carrying others off captives: the chieftain himself made his escape.* He was tributary to Guarionex, sovereign cacique of the Royal Vega. As this Indian prince reigned over a great and populous extent of country, his friendship was highly important

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 16.

fo the prosperity of the colony, while there was imminent risk of his hostility, from the unbridled excesses of the Spaniards who had been quartered in his dominions. Columbus sent for him, therefore, and explained to him that these excesses had been in violation of his orders, and contrary to his good intentions towards the natives, whom it was his wish in every way to please and benefit. He explained, likewise, that the expedition against Guatiguana was an act of mere individual punishment, not of hostility against the territories of Guarionex. The cacique was of a quiet and placable disposition, and whatever anger he might have felt was easily soothed. To link him in some degree to the Spanish interest, Columbus prevailed on him to give his daughter in marriage to the Indian interpreter, Diego Colon.* As a stronger precaution against any hostility on the part of the cacique, and to insure tranquillity in the important region of the Vega, he ordered a fortress to be erected in the midst of his territories, which he named Fort Conception. The easy cacique agreed without hesitation to a measure fraught with ruin to himself, and future slavery to his subjects.

The most formidable enemy remained to be disposed of,—Caonabo. His territories lay in the central and mountainous parts of the island, rendered difficult of access by rugged rocks, entangled forests, and frequent rivers. To make war upon this subtle and ferocious chieftain, in the depths of his wild woodland territory, and among the fastnesses of his mountains, where, at every

* P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv. Gio. Battista Spotorno, in his Memoir of Columbus, has been led into an error by the name of this Indian, and observes that Columbus had a brother named Diego, of whom he seemed to be ashamed, and whom he married to the daughter of an Indian chief.

step, there would be danger of ambush, would be a work of time, peril, and uncertain issue. In the meanwhile the settlements would never be secure from his secret and daring enterprises, and the working of the mines would be subject to frequent interruption. While perplexed on this subject, Columbus was relieved by an offer of Alonzo de Ojeda, to take the Carib chieftain by stratagem, and deliver him alive into his hands. The project was wild, hazardous, and romantic, characteristic of Ojeda, who was fond of distinguishing himself by extravagant exploits and feats of desperate bravery.

Choosing ten bold and hardy followers, well armed and well mounted, and invoking the protection of his patroness the Virgin, whose image as usual he bore with him as a safeguard, Ojeda plunged into the forest, and made his way above sixty leagues into the wild territories of Caonabo, whom he found in one of his most populous towns, the same now called Maguana, near the town of San Juan. Approaching the cacique with great deference as a sovereign prince, he professed to come on a friendly embassy from the admiral, who was Guamiquina, or chief of the Spaniards, and who had sent him an invaluable present.

Caonabo had tried Ojeda in battle; he had witnessed his fiery prowess, and had conceived a warrior's admiration of him. He received him with a degree of chivalrous courtesy, if such a phrase may apply to the savage state and rude hospitality of a wild warrior of the forest. The free, fearless deportment, the great personal strength, and the surprising agility and adroitness of Ojeda in all manly exercises, and in the use of all kinds of weapons, were calculated to delight a savage, and he soon became a great favorite with Caonabo.

Ojeda now used all his influence to prevail upon the cacique

to repair to Isabella, for the purpose of making a treaty with Columbus, and becoming the ally and friend of the Spaniards. It is said that he offered him, as a lure, the bell of the chapel of Isabella. This bell was the wonder of the island. When the Indians heard it ringing for mass, and beheld the Spaniards hastening toward the chapel, they imagined that it talked, and that the white men obeyed it. Regarding with superstition all things connected with the Spaniards, they looked upon this bell as something supernatural, and in their usual phrase, said it had come from "Turey," or the skies. Caonabo had heard the bell at a distance, in his prowlings about the settlement, and had longed to see it; but when it was proffered to him as a present of peace, he found it impossible to resist the temptation. He agreed, therefore, to set out for Isabella; but when the time came to depart, Ojeda beheld with surprise a powerful force of warriors assembled and ready to march. He asked the meaning of taking such an army on a mere friendly visit; the cacique proudly replied that it did not befit a great prince like himself, to go forth scantily attended. Ojeda was little satisfied with this reply; he knew the warlike character of Caonabo, and his deep subtlety; he feared some sinister design; a surprise of the fortress of Isabella, or an attempt upon the person of the admiral. He knew also that it was the wish of Columbus, either to make peace with the cacique, or to get possession of his person without the alternative of open warfare. He had recourse to a stratagem, therefore, which has an air of fable and romance, but which is recorded by all the contemporary historians with trivial variations, and which, Las Casas assures us, was in current circulation in the island when he arrived there, about six years after the event. It accords too with the adventurous and extravagant character of the

man, and with the wild stratagems and vaunting exploits incident to Indian warfare.

In the course of their march, having halted near the Little Yagui, a considerable branch of the Neyba, Ojeda one day produced a set of manacles of polished steel, so highly burnished that they looked like silver. These he assured Caonabo were royal ornaments which had come from heaven, or the Turey of Biscay;* that they were worn by the monarchs of Castile on solemn dances, and other high festivities, and were intended as presents to the cacique. He proposed that Caonabo should go to the river and bathe, after which he should be decorated with these ornaments, mounted on the horse of Ojeda, and should return in the state of a Spanish monarch, to astonish his subjects. The cacique was dazzled with the glitter of the manacles, and flattered with the idea of bestriding one of those tremendous animals so dreaded by his countrymen. He repaired to the river, and having bathed, was assisted to mount behind Ojeda, and the shackles were adjusted. Ojeda made several circuits to gain space, followed by his little band of horsemen, the Indians shrinking back from the prancing steeds. At length he made a wide sweep into the forest, until the trees concealed him from the sight of the army. His followers then closed round him, and drawing their swords, threatened Caonabo with instant death if he made the least noise or resistance. Binding him with cords to Ojeda to prevent his falling or effecting an escape, they put spurs to their horses, dashed across the river, and made off through the woods with their prize.†

* The principal iron manufactories of Spain are established in Biscay, where the ore is found in abundance.

† This romantic exploit of Ojeda is recorded at large by Las Casas; by his

They had now fifty or sixty leagues of wilderness to traverse on their way homewards, with here and there large Indian towns. They had borne off their captive far beyond the pursuit of his subjects; but the utmost vigilance was requisite to prevent his escape during this long and toilsome journey, and to avoid exciting the hostilities of any confederate cacique. They had to shun the populous parts of the country therefore, or to pass through the Indian towns at full gallop. They suffered greatly from fatigue, hunger, and watchfulness; encountering many perils, fording and swimming the numerous rivers of the plains, toiling through the deep tangled forests, and clambering over the high and rocky mountains. They accomplished all in safety, and Ojeda entered Isabella in triumph from this most daring and characteristic enterprise, with his wild Indian bound behind.

Columbus could not refrain from expressing his great satisfaction when this dangerous foe was delivered into his hands. The haughty Carib met him with a lofty and unsubdued air, disdaining to conciliate him by submission, or to deprecate his vengeance for the blood of white men which he had shed. He never bowed his spirit to captivity; on the contrary, though completely at the mercy of the Spaniards, he displayed that boasting defiance which is a part of Indian heroism, and which the savage maintains towards his tormentors, even amidst the agonies of the faggot and the stake. He vaunted his achievement in surprising and burning the fortress of Nativity, and slaughtering its garrison, and

copyist Herrera (decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 16); by Fernando Pizarro, in his Varones Illustres del Nuevo Mundo; and by Charlevoix in his History of St. Domingo. Peter Martyr and others have given it more concisely, alluding to, but not inserting its romantic details.

declared that he had secretly reconnoitred Isabella, with an intention of wreaking upon it the same desolation.

Columbus, though struck with the heroism of the chieftain, considered him a dangerous enemy, whom, for the peace of the island, it was advisable to send to Spain; in the meantime he ordered that he should be treated with kindness and respect, and lodged him in a part of his own dwelling, where, however, he kept him a prisoner in chains. This precaution must have been necessary, from the insecurity of his prison; for Las Casas observes, that the admiral's house not being spacious, nor having many chambers, the passers by in the street could see the captive chieftain from the portal.*

Caonabo always maintained a haughty deportment towards Columbus, while he never evinced the least animosity against Ojeda. He rather admired the latter as a consummate warrior, for having pounced upon him, and borne him off in this hawk-like manner, from the very midst of his fighting-men.

When Columbus entered the apartment where Caonabo was confined, all present rose, according to custom, and paid him reverence; the cacique alone neither moved nor took any notice of him. On the contrary, when Ojeda entered, though small in person and without external state, Caonabo rose and saluted him with profound respect. On being asked the reason of this, Columbus being Guamiquina, or great chief over all, and Ojeda but one of his subjects, the proud Carib replied, that the admiral had never dared to come personally to his house and seize him; it was only through the valor of Ojeda he was his prisoner; to Ojeda, therefore, he owed reverence, not to the admiral.†

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 102. † Las Casas, ubi sup., cap 102

The captivity of Caonabo was deeply felt by his subjects, for the natives of this island seem generally to have been extremely loyal, and strongly attached to their caciques. One of the brothers of Caonabo, a warrior of great courage and address, and very popular among the Indians, assembled an army of more than seven thousand men, and led them secretly to the neighborhood of St. Thomas, where Ojeda was again in command. His intention was to surprise a number of Spaniards, in hopes of obtaining his brother in exchange for them. Ojeda, as usual, had notice of the design, but was not to be again shut up in his fortress. Having been reinforced by a detachment sent by the Adelantado, he left a sufficient force in garrison, and with the remainder, and his little troop of horse, set off boldly to meet the savages. The brother of Caonabo, when he saw the Spaniards approaching, showed some military skill, disposing his army in five battalions. The impetuous attack of Ojeda, however, with his handful of horsemen, threw the Indian warriors into sudden panic. At the furious onset of these steel-clad beings, wielding their flashing weapons, and bestriding what appeared to be ferocious beasts of prey, they threw down their weapons and took to flight: many were slain, more were taken prisoners, and among the latter was the brother of Caonabo, bravely fighting in a righteous yet desperate cause.*

* Oviedo, Cronica de los Indias, lib. iii. cap. l. Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib. ii. p. 131.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL OF ANTONIO DE TORRES WITH FOUR SHIPS FROM SPAIN.—HIS RETURN WITH INDIAN SLAVES.

[1494.]

The colony was still suffering greatly from want of provisions; the European stock was nearly exhausted, and such was the idleness and improvidence of the colonists, or the confusion into which they had been thrown by the hostilities of the natives; or such was their exclusive eagerness after the precious metals, that they seem to have neglected the true wealth of the island, its quick and productive soil, and to have been in constant danger of famine, though in the midst of fertility.

At length they were relieved by the arrival of four ships, commanded by Antonio Torres, which brought an ample supply of provisions. There were also a physician and an apothecary, whose aid was greatly needed in the sickly state of the colony; but above all, there were mechanics, millers, fishermen, gardeners, and husbandmen,—the true kind of population for a colony.

Torres brought letters from the sovereigns, (dated August 16, 1494,) of the most gratifying kind, expressing the highest satisfaction at the accounts sent home by the admiral, and acknowledging that every thing in the course of his discoveries had turned out as he had predicted. They evinced the liveliest inte-

rest in the affairs of the colony, and a desire of receiving frequent intelligence as to his situation, proposing that a caravel should sail each month from Isabella and Spain. They informed him that all differences with Portugal were amicably adjusted, and acquainted him with the conventional agreement with that power relative to a geographical line, separating their newly-discovered possessions; requesting him to respect this agreement in the course of his discoveries. As in adjusting the arrangement with Portugal, and in drawing the proposed line, it was important to have the best advice, the sovereigns requested Columbus to return and be present at the convention; or, in case that should be inconvenient, to send his brother Bartholomew, or any other person whom he should consider fully competent, furnished with such maps, charts, and designs, as might be of service in the negotiation.*

There was another letter, addressed generally to the inhabitants of the colony, and to all who should proceed on voyages of discovery, commanding them to obey Columbus as implicitly as they would the sovereigns themselves, under pain of their high displeasure, and a fine of ten thousand maravedies, for each offence.

Such was the well-merited confidence reposed at this moment by the sovereigns in Columbus, but which was soon to be blighted by the insidious reports of worthless men. He was already aware of the complaints and misrepresentations which had been sent home from the colony, and which would be enforced by Margarite and Friar Boyle. He was aware that his standing in Spain was of that uncertain kind which a stranger always possesses in the service of a foreign country, where he has no friends nor con-

* Herrera, decad i. lib. ii. cap. 17.

nections to support him, and where even his very merits increase the eagerness of envy to cast him down. His efforts to promote the working of the mines, and to explore the resources of the island, had been impeded by the misconduct of Margarite and the disorderly life of the Spaniards in general, yet he apprehended that the very evils which they had produced would be alleged against him, and the want of profitable returns be cited to discredit and embarrass his expeditions.

To counteract any misrepresentations of the kind, Columbus hastened the return of the ships, and would have returned with them, not merely to comply with the wishes of the sovereigns in being present at the settlement of the geographical line, but to vindicate himself and his enterprises from the aspersions of his enemies. The malady, however, which confined him to his bed prevented his departure; and his brother Bartholomew was required to aid, with his practical good sense, and his resolute spirit, in regulating the disordered affairs of the island. It was determined, therefore, to send home his brother Diego, to attend to the wishes of the sovereigns, and to take care of his interests at court. At the same time, he exerted himself to the utmost to send by the ships satisfactory proofs of the value of his discoveries. He remitted by them all the gold that he could collect, with specimens of other metals, and of various fruits and valuable plants, which he had collected either in Hispaniola or in the course of his voyage. In his eagerness to produce immediate profit, and to indemnify the sovereigns for those expenses which bore hard upon the royal treasury, he sent, likewise, above five hundred Indian prisoners, who, he suggested, might be sold as slaves at Seville.

It is painful to find the brilliant renown of Columbus sullied

by so foul a stain. The customs of the times, however, must be pleaded in his apology. The precedent had been given long before, by both Spaniards and Portuguese, in their African discoveries, wherein the traffic in slaves had formed one of the greatest sources of profit. In fact, the practice had been sanctioned by the church itself, and the most learned theologians had pronounced all barbarous and infidel nations, who shut their ears to the truths of Christianity, fair objects of war and rapine, of captivity and slavery. If Columbus needed any practical illustration of this doctrine, he had it in the conduct of Ferdinand himself, in his late wars with the Moors of Granada, in which he had always been surrounded by a crowd of ghostly advisers, and had professed to do every thing for the glory and advancement of the faith. In this holy war, as it was termed, it was a common practice to make inroads into the Moorish territories and carry off *cavalgadas*, not merely of flocks and herds, but of human beings, and those not warriors taken with weapons in their hands, but quiet villagers, laboring peasantry, and helpless women and children. These were carried to the mart at Seville, or to other populous towns, and sold into slavery. The capture of Malaga was a memorable instance, where, as a punishment for an obstinate and brave defence, which should have excited admiration rather than revenge, eleven thousand people of both sexes, and of all ranks and ages, many of them highly cultivated and delicately reared, were suddenly torn from their homes, severed from each other, and swept into menial slavery, even though half of their ransoms had been paid. These circumstances are not advanced to vindicate, but to palliate the conduct of Columbus. He acted but in conformity to the customs of the times, and was sanctioned by the example of the sovereign under whom

he served. Las, Casas, the zealous and enthusiastic advocate of the Indians, who suffers no opportunity to escape him of exclaiming in vehement terms against their slavery, speaks with indulgence of Columbus on this head. If those pious and learned men, he observes, whom the sovereigns took for guides and instructors, were so ignorant of the injustice of this practice, it is no wonder that the unlettered admiral should not be conscious of its impropriety.*

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., tom. i. cap. 122, MS.

CHAPTER VI.

EXPEDITION OF COLUMBUS AGAINST THE INDIANS OF THE VEGA.—BATTLE.

[1494.]

NOTWITHSTANDING the defeat of the Indians by Ojeda, they still retained hostile intentions against the Spaniards. The idea of their cacique being a prisoner, and in chains, enraged the natives of Maguana; and the general sympathy manifested by other tribes of the island shows how widely that intelligent savage had extended his influence, and how greatly he was admired. He had still active and powerful relatives remaining, to attempt his rescue, or revenge his fall. One of his brothers, Manicaotex by name, a Carib, bold and warlike as himself, succeeded to the sway over his subjects. His favorite wife also, Anacaona, so famous for her charms, had great influence over her brother Behechio, cacique of the populous province of Xaragua. Through these means a violent and general hostility to the Spaniards was excited throughout the island, and the formidable league of the caciques, which Caonabo had in vain attempted to accomplish when at large, was produced by his captivity. Guacanagari, the cacique of Marien, alone remained friendly to the Spaniards, giving them timely information of the gathering storm, and offering to take the field with them as a faithful ally.

The protracted illness of Columbus, the scantiness of his military force, and the wretched state of the colonists in general, reduced by sickness and scarcity to great bodily weakness, had hitherto induced him to try every means of conciliation and stratagem to avert and dissolve the confederacy. He had at length recovered his health, and his followers were in some degree refreshed and invigorated by the supplies brought by the ships. At this time, he received intelligence that the allied caciques were actually assembled in great force in the Vega, within two days' march of Isabella, with an intention of making a general assault upon the settlement, and overwhelming it by numbers. Columbus resolved to take the field at once, and to carry the war into the territories of the enemy, rather than suffer it to be brought to his own door.

The whole sound and effective force that he could muster, in the present infirm state of the colony, did not exceed two hundred infantry and twenty horse. They were armed with cross-bows, swords, lances, and espingardas, or heavy arquebuses, which in those days were used with rests, and sometimes mounted on wheels. With these formidable weapons, a handful of European warriors, cased in steel and covered with bucklers, were able to cope with thousands of naked savages. They had aid of another kind, however, consisting of twenty blood-hounds, animals scarcely less terrible to the Indians than the horses, and infinitely more fatal. They were fearless and ferocious; nothing daunted them, nor when they had once seized upon their prey, could any thing compel them to relinquish their hold. The naked bodies of the Indians offered no defence against their attacks. They sprang on them, dragged them to the earth, and tore them to pieces.

The admiral was accompanied in the expedition by his brother

Bartholomew, whose counsel and aid he sought on all occasions, and who had not merely great personal force and undaunted courage, but also a decidedly military turn of mind. Guacanagari also brought his people into the field: neither he nor his subjects, however, were of a warlike character, nor calculated to render much assistance. The chief advantage of his co-operation was, that it completely severed him from the other caciques, and insured the dependence of himself and his subjects upon the Spaniards. In the present infant state of the colony its chief security depended upon jealousies and dissensions sown among the native powers of the island.

On the 27th of March, 1495, Columbus issued forth from Isabella with his little army, and advanced by marches of ten leagues a day in quest of the enemy. He ascended again to the mountain-pass of the Cavaliers, whence he had first looked down upon the Vega. With what different feelings did he now contemplate it. The vile passions of the white men had already converted this smiling, beautiful, and once peaceful and hospitable region, into a land of wrath and hostility. Wherever the smoke of an Indian town rose from among the trees, it marked a horde of exasperated enemies, and the deep rich forests below him swarmed with lurking warriors. In the picture which his imagination had drawn of the peaceful and inoffensive nature of this people, he had flattered himself with the idea of ruling over them as a patron and benefactor, but now he found himself compelled to assume the odious character of a conqueror.

The Indians had notice, by their scouts, of his approach, but though they had already had some slight experience of the warfare of the white men, they were confident from the vast superiority of their numbers, which, it is said, amounted to one hundred

thousand men.* This is probably an exaggeration: as Indians never draw out into the open field in order of battle, but lurk among the forests, it is difficult to ascertain their force, and their rapid movements and sudden sallies and retreats from various parts, together with the wild shouts and yells from opposite quarters of the woodlands, are calculated to give an exaggerated idea of their number. The army must, however, have been great, as it consisted of the combined forces of several caciques of this populous island. It was commanded by Manicaotex, the brother of Caonabo. The Indians, who were little skilled in numeration and incapable of reckoning beyond ten, had a simple mode of ascertaining and describing the force of an enemy, by counting out a grain of maize or Indian corn for every warrior. When, therefore, the spies, who had watched from rocks and thickets the march of Columbus, came back with a mere handful of corn as the amount of his army, the caciques scoffed at the idea of so scanty a number making head against their countless multitude.†

Columbus drew near to the enemy about the place where the town of St. Jago has since been built. The Indian army, under Manicaotex, was posted on a plain interspersed with clusters of forest-trees, now known as the Savanna of Matanza. Having ascertained the great force of the enemy, Don Bartholomew advised that their little army should be divided into detachments, and should attack the Indians at the same moment from several quarters: this plan was adopted. The infantry, separating into different bodies, advanced suddenly from various directions with great din of drums and trumpets, and a destructive discharge of firearms from the covert of the trees. The Indians were thrown

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 104, MS. † Las Casas, ubi sup.

into complete confusion. An army seemed pressing upon them from every quarter, their fellow-warriors to be laid low with thunder and lightning from the forests. While driven together and confounded by these attacks, Alonzo de Ojeda charged their main body impetuously with his troop of cavalry, cutting his way with lance and sabre. The horses bore down the terrified Indians, while their riders dealt their blows on all sides unopposed. The blood-hounds at the same time rushed upon the naked savages, seizing them by the throat, dragging them to the earth, and tearing out their bowels. The Indians, unaccustomed to large and fierce quadrupeds of any kind, were struck with horror when assailed by these ferocious animals. They thought the horses equally fierce and devouring. The contest, if such it might be called, was of short duration

The Indians fled in every direction with yells and howlings; some clambered to the top of rocks and precipices, whence they made piteous supplications, and offers of complete submission; many were killed, many made prisoners, and the confederacy was for the time completely broken up and dispersed.

Guacanagari had accompanied the Spaniards into the field according to his promise, but he was little more than a spectator of this battle or rather rout. He was not of a martial spirit, and both he and his subjects must have shrunk with awe at this unusual and terrific burst of war, even though on the part of their allies. His participation in the hostilities of the white men was never forgiven by the other caciques, and he returned to his dominions, followed by the hatred and execrations of all the islanders.

CHAPTER VII

SUBJUGATION OF THE NATIVES.—IMPOSITION OF TRIBUTE.

[1494.]

Columbus followed up his victory by making a military tour through various parts of the island, and reducing them to obedience. The natives made occasional attempts at opposition, but were easily checked. Ojeda's troop of cavalry was of great efficacy from the rapidity of its movements, the active intrepidity of its commander, and the terror inspired by the horses. There was no service too wild and hazardous for Ojeda. If any appearance of war arose in a distant part of the country, he would penetrate with his little squadron of cavalry through the depths of the forests, and fall like a thunderbolt upon the enemy, disconcerting all their combinations and enforcing implicit submission.

The Royal Vega was soon brought into subjection. Being an immense plain, perfectly level, it was easily overrun by the horsemen, whose appearance overawed the most populous villages. Guarionex, its sovereign cacique, was of a mild and placable character, and though he had been roused to war by the instigation of the neighboring chieftains, he readily submitted to the domination of the Spaniards. Manicaotex, the brother of Caonabo, was also obliged to sue for peace; and being the prime mover of the confederacy, the other caciques followed his example. Beheehio

alone, the cacique of Xaragua, and brother-in-law of Caonabo, made no overtures of submission. His territories lay remote from Isabella, at the western extremity of the island, around the deep bay called the Bight of Leogan, and the long peninsula called Cape Tiburon. They were difficult of access, and had not as yet been visited by the white men. He retired into his domains, taking with him his sister, the beautiful Anacaona, wife of Caonabo, whom he cherished with fraternal affection under her misfortunes, who soon acquired almost equal sway over his subjects with himself, and was destined subsequently to make some figure in the events of the island.

Having been forced to take the field by the confederacy of the caciques, Columbus now asserted the right of a conqueror, and considered how he might turn his conquest to most profit. His constant anxiety was to make wealthy returns to Spain, for the purpose of indemnifying the sovereigns for their great expenses; of meeting the public expectations, so extravagantly excited; and above all of silencing the calumnies of those who had gone home determined to make the most discouraging representations of his discoveries. He endeavored, therefore, to raise a large and immediate revenue, by imposing heavy tributes on the subjected provinces. In those of the Vega, Cibao, and all the region of the mines, each individual above the age of fourteen years was required to pay, every three months, the measure of a Flemish hawk's-bell of gold dust.* The caciques had to pay a much

* A hawk's-bell, according to Las Casas (Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 105) contains about three castellanos worth of gold dust, equal to five dollars, and in estimating the superior value of gold in those days, equivalent to fifteen dollars of our time. A quantity of gold worth one hundred and fifty castellanos, was equivalent to seven hundred and ninety-eight dollars of the present day.

larger amount for their personal tribute. Manicaotex, the brother of Caonabo, was obliged individually to render in, every three months, half a calabash of gold, amounting to one hundred and fifty pesos. In those districts which were distant from the mines, and produced no gold, each individual was required to furnish an arroba (twenty-five pounds) of cotton every three months. Each Indian, on rendering this tribute, received a copper medal as a certificate of payment, which he was to wear suspended round his neck; those who were found without such documents were liable to arrest and punishment.

The taxes and tributes thus imposed, bore hard upon the spirit of the natives, accustomed to be but lightly tasked by their caciques; and the caciques themselves found the exactions intolerably grievous. Guarionex, the sovereign of the Royal Vega, represented to Columbus the difficulty he had in complying with the terms of his tribute. His richly fertile plain yielded no gold; and though the mountains on his borders contained mines, and their brooks and torrents washed down gold dust into the sands of the rivers, yet his subjects were not skilled in the art of collecting it. He proffered, therefore, instead of the tribute required, to cultivate with grain a band of country stretching across the island from sea to sea, enough, says Las Casas, to have furnished all Castile with bread for ten years.*

His offer was rejected. Columbus knew that gold alone would satisfy the avaricious dreams excited in Spain, and insure the popularity and success of his enterprises. Seeing, however, the difficulty that many of the Indians had in furnishing the amount of gold dust required, he lowered the demand to the measure of one half of a hawk's-bell.

* Las Casas. Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 105.

To enforce the payment of these tributes, and to maintain the subjection of the island, Columbus put the fortress already built in a strong state of defence, and erected others. Beside those of Isabella, and of St. Thomas, in the mountains of Cibao, there were now the fortress of Magdalena, in the Royal Vega, near the site of the old town of Santiago, on the river Jalaqua, two leagues from the place where the new town was afterwards built; another called Santa Catalina, the site of which is near the Estencia Yaqui; another called Esperanza, on the banks of the river Yaqui, facing the outlet of the mountain pass La Puerta de los Hidalgos, now the pass of Marney; but the most important of those recently erected, was Fort Conception, in one of the most fruitful and beautiful parts of the Vega, about fifteen leagues to the east of Esperanza, controlling the extensive and populous domains of Guarionex.*

In this way was the yoke of servitude fixed upon the island, and its thraldom effectually insured. Deep despair now fell upon the natives when they found a perpetual task inflicted upon them, enforced at stated and frequently recurring periods. Weak and indolent by nature, unused to labor of any kind, and brought up in the untasked idleness of their soft climate and their fruitful groves, death itself seemed preferable to a life of toil and anxiety. They saw no end to this harassing evil, which had so suddenly fallen upon them; no escape from its all-pervading influence; no prospect of return to that roving independence and ample leisure, so dear to the wild inhabitants of the forest. The pleasant life of the island was at an end: the dream in the shade by day; the slumber during the sultry noontide heat by the fountain or the stream, or under the spreading palm-tree; and the song, the

* Las Casas, ubi sup., cap. 110.

dance, and the game in the mellow evening, when summoned to their simple amusements by the rude Indian drum. They were now obliged to grope day by day, with bending body and anxious eye, along the borders of their rivers, sifting the sands for the grains of gold which every day grew more scanty; or to labor in their fields beneath the fervor of a tropical sun, to raise food for their taskmasters, or to produce the vegetable tribute imposed upon them. They sank to sleep weary and exhausted at night, with the certainty that the next day was but to be a repetition of the same toil and suffering. Or if they occasionally indulged in their national dances, the ballads to which they kept time were of a melancholy and plaintive character. They spoke of the times that were past before the white men had introduced sorrow, and slavery, and weary labor among them; and they rehearsed pretended prophecies, handed down from their ancestors, foretelling the invasion of the Spaniards; that strangers should come into their island, clothed in apparel, with swords capable of cleaving a man asunder at a blow, under whose yoke their posterity should be subdued. These ballads, or areytos, they sang with mournful tunes and doleful voices, bewailing the loss of their liberty, and their painful servitude.*

They had flattered themselves, for a time, that the visit of the strangers would be but temporary, and that, spreading their ample sails, their ships would once more bear them back to their home in the sky. In their simplicity, they had repeatedly inquired when they intended to return to Turey, or the heavens. They now beheld them taking root, as it were, in the island. They beheld their vessels lying idle and rotting in the harbor, while the crews, scattered about the country, were building habitations and

* Peter Martyr, decad. iii. lib. ix.

fortresses, the solid construction of which, unlike their own slight cabins, gave evidence of permanent abode.*

Finding how vain was all attempt to deliver themselves by warlike means from these invincible intruders, they now concerted a forlorn and desperate mode of annoyance. They perceived that the settlement suffered greatly from shortness of provisions, and depended, in a considerable degree, upon the supplies furnished by the natives. The fortresses in the interior, also, and the Spaniards quartered in the villages, looked almost entirely to them for subsistence. They agreed among themselves, therefore, not to cultivate the fruits, the roots and maize, their chief articles of food, and to destroy those already growing; hoping, by producing a famine, to starve the strangers from the island. They little knew, observes Las Casas, one of the characteristics of the Spaniards, who the more hungry they are, the more inflexible they become, and the more hardened to endure suffering.† They carried their plan generally into effect, abandoning their habitations, laying waste their fields and groves, and retiring to the mountains, where there were roots and herbs and abundance of utias for their subsistence.

This measure did indeed produce much distress among the Spaniards, but they had foreign resources, and were enabled to endure it by husbanding the partial supplies brought by their ships; the most disastrous effects fell upon the natives themselves. The Spaniards stationed in the various fortresses, finding that there was not only no hope of tribute, but a danger of famine

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 106.

† No conociendo la propriedad de los Españoles, los cuales cuanto mas hambrientos, tanto mayor teson tienen y mas duros son de sufrir y para sufrir. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 106

from this wanton waste and sudden desertion, pursued the natives to their retreats, to compel them to return to labor. The Indians took refuge in the most steril and dreary heights; flying from one wild retreat to another, the women with their children in their arms or at their backs, and all worn out with fatigue and hunger, and harassed by perpetual alarms. In every noise of the forest or the mountain they fancied they heard the sound of their pursuers; they hid themselves in damp and dismal caverns, or in the rocky banks and margins of the torrents, and not daring to hunt, or fish, or even to venture forth in quest of nourishing roots and vegetables, they had to satisfy their raging hunger with unwholesome food. In this way, many thousands of them perished miserably, through famine, fatigue, terror, and various contagious maladies engendered by their sufferings. All spirit of opposition was at length completely quelled. The surviving Indians returned in despair to their habitations, and submitted humbly to the yoke. So deep an awe did they conceive of their conquerors, that it is said a Spaniard might go singly and securely all over the island, and the natives would even transport him from place to place on their shoulders.*

Before passing on to other events, it may be proper here to notice the fate of Guacanagari, as he makes no further appearance in the course of this history. His friendship for the Spaniards had severed him from his countrymen, but did not exonerate him from the general woes of the island. His territories, like those of the other caciques, were subjected to a tribute, which his people, with the common repugnance to labor, found it difficult to pay. Columbus, who knew his worth, and could have protected

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. c. 106. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60.

him, was long absent either in the interior of the island, or detained in Europe by his own wrongs. In the interval, the Spaniards forgot the hospitality and services of Guacanagari, and his tribute was harshly exacted. He found himself overwhelmed with opprobrium from his countrymen at large, and assailed by the clamors and lamentations of his suffering subjects. The strangers whom he had succored in distress, and taken as it were to the bosom of his native island, had become its tyrants and oppressors. Care, and toil, and poverty, and strong-handed violence, had spread their curses over the land, and he felt as if he had invoked them on his race. Unable to bear the hostilities of his fellow caciques, the woes of his subjects, and the extortions of his ungrateful allies, he took refuge at last in the mountains, where he died obscurely and in misery.*

An attempt has been made by Oviedo to defame the character of this Indian prince: it is not for Spaniards, however, to excuse their own ingratitude by casting a stigma on his name. He appears to have always manifested towards them that true friendship which shines brightest in the dark days of adversity. He might have played a nobler part, in making a stand, with his brother caciques, to drive these intruders from his native soil; but he appears to have been fascinated by his admiration of the strangers, and his personal attachment to Columbus. He was bountiful, hospitable, affectionate, and kind-hearted; competent to rule a gentle and unwarlike people in the happier days of the island, but unfitted, through the softness of his nature, for the stern turmoil which followed the arrival of the white men.

* Charlevoix, Hist. de St. Domingo, lib. ii.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTRIGUES AGAINST COLUMBUS IN THE COURT OF SPAIN.—AGUADO SENT TO INVESTIGATE THE AFFAIRS OF HISPANIOLA.

[1495.]

WHILE Columbus was endeavoring to remedy the evils produced by the misconduct of Margarite, that recreant commander and his political coadjutor, Friar Boyle, were busily undermining his reputation in the court of Castile. They accused him of deceiving the sovereigns and the public by extravagant descriptions of the countries he had discovered; they pronounced the island of Hispaniola a source of expense rather than profit, and they drew a dismal picture of the sufferings of the colony, occasioned, as they said, by the oppressions of Columbus and his brothers. They charged them with tasking the community with excessive labor during a time of general sickness and debility; with stopping the rations of individuals on the most trifling pretext, to the great detriment of their health; with wantonly inflicting severe corporal punishments on the common people, and with heaping indignities on Spanish gentlemen of rank. They said nothing, however, of the exigencies which had called for unusual labor; nor of the idleness and profligacy which required coercion and chastisement; nor of the seditious cabals of the Spanish cavaliers,

who had been treated with indulgence rather than severity. In addition to these complaints, they represented the state of confu sion of the island, in consequence of the absence of the admiral, and the uncertainty which prevailed concerning his fate, intimating the probability of his having perished in his foolhardy attempts to explore unknown seas, and discover unprofitable lands.

These prejudiced and exaggerated representations derived much weight from the official situations of Margarite and Friar Boyle. They were supported by the testimony of many discontented and factious idlers, who had returned with them to Spain. Some of these persons had connexions of rank, who were ready to resent, with Spanish haughtiness, what they considered the arrogant assumptions of an ignoble foreigner. Thus the popularity of Columbus received a vital blow, and immediately began to decline. The confidence of the sovereigns also was impaired, and precautions were adopted which savor strongly of the cautious and suspicious policy of Ferdinand.

It was determined to send some person of trust and confidence, who should take upon himself the government of the island in case of the continued absence of the admiral, and who, even in the event of his return, should inquire into the alleged evils and abuses, and remedy such as should appear really in existence. The person proposed for this difficult office was Diego Carillo, a commander of a military order; but as he was not immediately prepared to sail with the fleet of caravels about to depart with supplies, the sovereigns wrote to Fonseca, the superintendent of India affairs, to send some trusty person with the vessels, to take charge of the provisions with which they were freighted. These he was to distribute among the colonists, under the supervision of

the admiral, or, in case of his absence, in presence of those in authority. He was also to collect information concerning the manner in which the island had been governed, the conduct of persons in office, the causes and authors of existing grievances, and the measures by which they were to be remedied. Having collected such information, he was to return and make report to the sovereigns; but in case he should find the admiral at the island, every thing was to remain subject to his control.

There was another measure adopted by the sovereigns about this time, which likewise shows the declining favor of Columbus. On the 10th of April, 1495, a proclamation was issued, giving general permission to native-born subjects to settle in the island of Hispaniola, and to go on private voyages of discovery and traffic to the New World. This was granted, subject to certain conditions.

All vessels were to sail exclusively from the port of Cadiz, and under the inspection of officers appointed by the crown. Those who embarked for Hispaniola without pay, and at their own expense, were to have lands assigned to them, and to be provisioned for one year, with a right to retain such lands, and all houses they might erect upon them. Of all gold which they might collect, they were to retain one-third for themselves, and pay two-thirds to the crown. Of all other articles of merchandise, the produce of the island, they were to pay merely one-tenth to the crown. Their purchases were to be made in the presence of officers appointed by the sovereigns, and the royal duties paid into the hands of the king's receiver.

Each ship sailing on private enterprise, was to take one or two persons named by the royal officers at Cadiz. One-tenth of the tonnage of the ship was to be at the service of the crown,

free of charge. One-tenth of whatever such ships should procure in the newly-discovered countries, was to be paid to the crown on their return. These regulations included private ships trading to Hispaniola with provisions.

For every vessel thus fitted out on private adventure, Columbus, in consideration of his privilege of an eighth of tonnage, was to have the right to freight one on his own account.

This general license for voyages of discovery was made in consequence of the earnest applications of Vincent Yañes Pinzon, and other able and intrepid navigators, most of whom had sailed with Columbus. They offered to make voyages at their own cost and hazard. The offer was tempting and well-timed. The government was poor, the expeditions of Columbus were expensive, yet their object was too important to be neglected. Here was an opportunity of attaining all the ends proposed, not merely without expense, but with a certainty of gain. The permission, therefore, was granted, without consulting the opinion or the wishes of the admiral. It was loudly complained of by him, as an infringement of his privileges, and as disturbing the career of regular and well-organized discovery, by the licentious and sometimes predatory enterprises of reckless adventurers. Doubtless, much of the odium that has attached itself to the Spanish discoveries in the New World, has arisen from the grasping avidity of private individuals.

Just at this juncture, in the early part of April, while the interests of Columbus were in such a critical situation, the ships commanded by Torres arrived in Spain. They brought intelligence of the safe return of the admiral to Hispaniola, from his voyage along the southern coast of Cuba, with the evidence which he had collected to prove that it was the extremity of the Asiatic

continent, and that he had penetrated to the borders of the wealthiest countries of the East. Specimens were likewise brought of the gold, and the various animal and vegetable curiosities, which he had procured in the course of his voyage. No arrival could have been more timely. It at once removed all doubts respecting his safety, and obviated the necessity of part of the precautionary measures then on the point of being taken. The supposed discovery of the rich coast of Asia, also, threw a temporary splendor about his expedition, and again awakened the gratitude of the sovereigns. The effect was immediately apparent in their measures. Instead of leaving it to the discretion of Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca to appoint whom he pleased to the commission of inquiry about to be sent out, they retracted that power, and nominated Juan Aguado.

He was chosen, because, on returning from Hispaniola, he had been strongly recommended to royal favor by Columbus. It was intended, therefore, as a mark of consideration to the latter to appoint as commissioner a person of whom he had expressed so high an opinion, and who, it was to be presumed, entertained for him a grateful regard.

Fonseca, in virtue of his official station as superintendent of the affairs of the Indies, and probably to gratify his growing animosity for Columbus, had detained a quantity of gold which Don Diego, brother to the admiral, had brought on his own private account. The sovereigns wrote to him repeatedly, ordering him not to demand the gold, or if he had seized it, to return it immediately, with satisfactory explanations, and to write to Columbus in terms calculated to soothe any angry feelings which he might have excited. He was ordered, also, to consult the persons recently arrived from Hispaniola, in what manner he could yield

satisfaction to the admiral, and to act accordingly. Fonseca thus suffered one of the severest humiliations of an arrogant spirit, that of being obliged to make atonement for its arrogance. It quickened, however, the malice which he had conceived against the admiral and his family. Unfortunately his official situation, and the royal confidence which he enjoyed, gave him opportunities of gratifying it subsequently in a thousand insidious ways.

While the sovereigns thus endeavored to avoid any act which might give umbrage to Columbus, they took certain measures to provide for the tranquillity of the colony. In a letter to the admiral, they directed that the number of persons in the settlement should be limited to five hundred, a greater number being considered unnecessary for the service of the island, and a burdensome expense to the crown. To prevent further discontents about provisions, they ordered that the rations of individuals should be dealt out in portions every fifteen days; and that all punishment by short allowance, or the stoppage of rations, should be discontinued, as tending to injure the health of the colonists, who required every assistance of nourishing diet, to fortify them against the maladies incident to a strange climate.

An able and experienced metallurgist, named Pablo Belvis, was sent out in place of the wrong-headed Firmin Cedo. He was furnished with all the necessary engines and implements for mining, assaying, and purifying the precious metals, and with liberal pay and privileges. Ecclesiastics were also sent to supply the place of Friar Boyle, and of certain of his brethren, who desired to leave the island. The instruction and conversion of the natives awakened more and more the solicitude of the queen. In the ships of Torres a large number of Indians arrived, who had been captured in the recent wars with the caciques. Royal

orders had been issued, that they should be sold as slaves in the markets of Andalusia, as had been the custom with respect to negroes taken on the coast of Africa, and to Moorish prisoners captured in the war with Granada. Isabella, however, had been deeply interested by the accounts given of the gentle and hospitable character of these islanders, and of their great docility. The discovery had been made under her immediate auspices; she looked upon these people as under her peculiar care, and she anticipated, with pious enthusiasm, the glory of leading them from darkness into the paths of light. Her compassionate spirit revolted at the idea of treating them as slaves, even though sanctioned by the customs of the time. Within five days after the royal order for the sale, a letter was written by the sovereigns to Bishop Fonseca, suspending that order, until they could inquire into the cause for which the Indians had been made prisoners, and consult learned and pious theologians, whether their sale would be justifiable in the eyes of God.* Much difference of opinion took place among divines, on this important question; the queen eventually decided it according to the dictates of her own pure conscience and charitable heart. She ordered that the Indians should be sent back to their native country, and enjoined that the islanders should be conciliated by the gentlest means, instead of being treated with severity. Unfortunately her orders came too late to Hispaniola, to have the desired effect. The scenes of warfare and violence, produced by the bad passions of the colonists and the vengeance of the natives, were not to be forgotten, and mutual distrust and rankling animosity had grown up between them, which no after exertions could eradicate.

* Letter of the Sovereigns to Fonseca. Navarrete, Colleccion de los Viages, . 11, Doc. 92.

CHAPTER IX.

ARRIVAL OF AGUADO AT ISABELLA.—HIS ARROGANT CONDUCT.—TEMPEST IN THE HARBOR.

[1495.]

JUAN AGUADO set sail from Spain towards the end of August, with four caravels, well freighted with supplies of all kinds. Don Diego Columbus returned in this squadron to Hispaniola, and arrived at Isabella in the month of October, while the admiral was absent, occupied in re-establishing the tranquillity of the interior. Aguado, as has already been shown, was under obligations to Columbus, who had distinguished him from among his companions, and had recommended him to the favor of the sovereigns. He was, however, one of those weak men, whose heads are turned by the least elevation. Puffed up by a little temporary power, he lost sight, not merely of the respect and gratitude due to Columbus, but of the nature and extent of his own commission. Instead of acting as an agent employed to collect information, he assumed a tone of authority, as though the reins of government had been transferred into his hands. He interfered in public affairs; ordered various persons to be arrested; called to account the officers employed by the admiral; and paid no respect to Don Bartholomew Columbus, who remained in command during the absence of his brother. The Adelantado, astonished at this pre-

sumptior., demanded a sight of the commission under which he acted; but Aguado treated him with great haughtiness, replying that he would show it only to the admiral. On second thoughts, however, lest there should be doubts in the public mind of his right to interfere in the affairs of the colony, he ordered his letter of credence from the sovereigns to be pompously proclaimed by sound of trumpet. It was brief but comprehensive, to the following purport:—"Cavaliers, Esquires, and other persons, who by our orders are in the Indies, we send to you Juan Aguado, our groom of the chambers, who will speak to you on our part. We command you to give him faith and credit."

The report now circulated, that the downfall of Columbus and his family was at hand, and that an auditor had arrived, empowered to hear and to redress the grievances of the public. This rumor originated with Aguado himself, who threw out menaces of rigid investigations and signal punishments. It was a time of jubilee for offenders. Every culprit started up into an accuser; every one who by negligence or crime had incurred the wholesome penalties of the laws, was loud in his clamors against the oppression of Columbus. There were ills enough in the colony, some incident to its situation, others produced by the misdeeds of the colonists, but all were ascribed to the mal-administration of the admiral. He was made responsible alike for the evils produced by others, and for his own stern remedies. All the old complaints were reiterated against him and his brothers, and the usual and illiberal cause given for their oppressions, that they were foreigners, who sought merely their own interest and aggrandizement, at the expense of the sufferings and the indignities of Spaniards.

Destitute of discrimination to perceive what was true and

what false in these complaints, and anxious only to condemn, Aguado saw in every thing conclusive testimony of the culpability of Columbus. He intimated, and perhaps thought, that the admiral was keeping at a distance from Isabella, through fear of encountering his investigations. In the fullness of his presumption, he even set out with a body of horse to go in quest of him. A vain and weak man in power is prone to employ satellites of his own description. The arrogant and boasting followers of Aguado, wherever they went, spread rumors among the natives of the might and importance of their chief, and of the punishment he intended to inflict upon Columbus. In a little while the report circulated through the island, that a new admiral had arrived to administer the government, and that the former one was to be put to death.

The news of the arrival and of the insolent conduct of Aguado reached Columbus in the interior of the island; he immediately hastened to Isabella to give him a meeting. Aguado, hearing of his approach, also returned there. As every one knew the lofty spirit of Columbus, his high sense of his services, and his jealous maintenance of his official dignity, a violent explosion was anticipated at the impending interview. Aguado also expected something of the kind, but, secure in his royal letter of credence, he looked forward with the ignorant audacity of a little mind to the result. The sequel showed how difficult it is for petty spirits to anticipate the conduct of a man like Columbus in an extraordinary situation. His natural heat and impetuosity had been subdued by a life of trials; he had learned to bring his passions into subjection to his judgment; he had too true an estimate of his own dignity to enter into a contest with a shallow boaster like Aguado; above all, he had a profound respect for the authority of his sov-

ereigns; for in his enthusiastic spirit, prone to deep feelings of reverence, his loyalty was inferior only to his religion. He received Aguado, therefore, with grave and punctilious courtesy; and retorted upon him his own ostentatious ceremonial, ordering that the letter of credence should be again proclaimed by sound of trumpet in presence of the populace. He listened to it with solemn deference, and assured Aguado of his readiness to acquiesce in whatever might be the pleasure of his sovereigns.

This unexpected moderation, while it astonished the beholders, foiled and disappointed Aguado. He had come prepared for a scene of altercation, and had hoped that Columbus, in the heat and impatience of the moment, would have said or done something that might be construed into disrespect for the authority of the sovereigns. He endeavored, in fact, some months afterwards, to procure from the public notaries present, a prejudicial statement of the interview; but the deference of the admiral for the royal letter of credence had been too marked to be disputed; and all the testimonials were highly in his favor.*

Aguado continued to intermeddle in public affairs, and the respect and forbearance with which he was uniformly treated by Columbus, and the mildness of the latter in all his measures to appease the discontents of the colony, were regarded as proofs of his loss of moral courage. He was looked upon as a declining man, and Aguado hailed as the lord of the ascendant. Every dastard spirit who had any lurking ill-will, any real or imaginary cause of complaint, now hastened to give it utterance; perceiving that, in gratifying his malice, he was promoting his interest, and that in vilifying the admiral he was gaining the friendship of Aguado.

* Herrera, Hist Ind., decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 18.

The poor Indians, too, harassed by the domination of the white men, rejoiced in the prospect of a change of rulers; vainly hoping that it might produce a mitigation of their sufferings. Many of the caciques who had promised allegiance to the admiral after their defeat in the Vega, now assembled at the house of Manicaotex, the brother of Caonabo, near the river Yagui, where they joined in a formal complaint against Columbus, whom they considered the cause of all the evils which had sprung from the disobedience and the vices of his followers.

Aguado now considered the great object of his mission fulfilled. He had collected information sufficient, as he thought, to insure the ruin of the admiral and his brothers, and he prepared to return to Spain. Columbus resolved to do the same. He felt that it was time to appear at court, and dispel the cloud of calumny gathering against him. He had active enemies, of standing and influence, who were seeking every occasion to throw discredit upon himself and his enterprises; and, stranger and foreigner as he was, he had no active friends at court to oppose their machinations. He feared that they might eventually produce an effect upon the royal mind, fatal to the progress of discovery: he was anxious to return, therefore, and explain the real causes of the repeated disappointments with respect to profits anticipated from his enterprises. It is not one of the least singular traits in this history, that after having been so many years in persuading mankind that there was a new world to be discovered, he had almost equal trouble in proving to them the advantage of its discovery.

When the ships were ready to depart, a terrible storm swept the island. It was one of those awful whirlwinds which occasionally rage within the tropics, and were called by the Indians "furicanes," or "uricans," a name they still retain with trifling

variation. About mid-day a furious wind sprang up from the east, driving before it dense volumes of cloud and vapor. Encountering another tempest of wind from the west, it appeared as if a violent conflict ensued. The clouds were rent by incessant flashes, or rather streams of lightning. At one time they were piled up high in the sky, at another they swept to the earth, filling the air with a baleful darkness more dismal than the obscurity of midnight. Wherever the whirlwind passed, whole tracts of forests were shivered and stripped of their leaves and branches: those of gigantic size, which resisted the blast, were torn up by the roots, and hurled to a great distance. Groves were rent from the mountain precipices, with vast masses of earth and rock, tumbling into the valleys with terrific noise, and choking the course of rivers. The fearful sounds in the air and on the earth, the pealing thunder, the vivid lightning, the howling of the wind, the crash of falling trees and rocks, filled every one with affright; and many thought that the end of the world was at hand. Some fled to caverns for safety, for their frail houses were blown down, and the air was filled with the trunks and branches of trees, and even with fragments of rocks, carried along by the fury of the tempest. When the hurricane reached the harbor, it whirled the ships round as they lay at anchor, snapped their cables, and sank three of them with all who were on board. Others were driven about, dashed against each other, and tossed mere wrecks upon the shore by the swelling surges of the sea, which in some places rolled for three or four miles upon the land. The tempest lasted for three hours. When it had passed away, and the sun again appeared, the Indians regarded each other in mute astonishment and dismay. Never in their memory, nor in the traditions of their ancestors, had their island been visited by such a storm. They believed

that the Deity had sent this fearful ruin to punish the cruelties and crimes of the white men; and declared that this people had moved the very air, the water, and the earth, to disturb their tranquil life, and to desolate their island.*

* Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 7. Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv.

CHAPTER X.

DISCOVERY OF THE MINES OF HAYNA

[1496.]

In the recent hurricane, the four caravels of Aguado had been destroyed, together with two others which were in the harbor. The only vessel which survived was the Niña, and that in a very shattered condition. Columbus gave orders to have her immediately repaired, and another caravel constructed out of the wreck of those which had been destroyed. While waiting until they should be ready for sea, he was cheered by tidings of rich mines in the interior of the island, the discovery of which is attributed to an incident of a somewhat romantic nature.* A young Arragonian, named Miguel Diaz, in the service of the Adelantado, having a quarrel with another Spaniard, fought with him, and wounded him dangerously. Fearful of the consequences, he fled from the settlement, accompanied by five or six comrades, who had either been engaged in the affray, or were personally attached to him. Wandering about the island, they came to an Indian village on the southern coast, near the mouth of the river Ozema, where the city of San Domingo is at present situated. They were received with kindness by the natives, and resided for some

* Oviedo, Cronica de los Indias, lib. ii. cap. 13.

time among them. The village was governed by a female cacique, who soon conceived a strong attachment for the young Arragonian. Diaz was not insensible to her tenderness, a connexion was formed between them, and they lived for some time very happily together.

The recollection of his country and his friends began at length to steal upon the thoughts of the young Spaniard. It was a melancholy lot to be exiled from civilized life, and an outcast from among his countrymen. He longed to return to the settlement, but dreaded the punishment that awaited him, from the austere justice of the Adelantado. His Indian bride, observing him frequently melancholy and lost in thought, penetrated the cause, with the quick intelligence of female affection. Fearful that he would abandon her, and return to his countrymen, she endeavored to devise some means of drawing the Spaniards to that part of the island. Knowing that gold was their sovereign attraction, she informed Diaz of certain rich mines in the neighborhood, and urged him to persuade his countrymen to abandon the comparatively steril and unhealthy vicinity of Isabella, and settle upon the fertile banks of the Ozema; promising they should be received with the utmost kindness and hospitality by her nation.

Struck with the suggestion, Diaz made particular inquiries about the mines, and was convinced that they abounded in gold. He noticed the superior fruitfulness and beauty of the country, the excellence of the river, and the security of the harbor at its entrance. He flattered himself that the communication of such valuable intelligence would make his peace at Isabella, and obtain his pardon from the Adelantado. Full of these hopes, he procured guides from among the natives, and taking a temporary leave of his Indian bride, set out with his comrades through the

wilderness for the settlement, which was about fifty leagues distant. Arriving there secretly, he learnt to his great joy, that the man whom he had wounded had recovered. He now presented himself boldly before the Adelantado, relying that his tidings would earn his forgiveness. He was not mistaken. No news could have come more opportunely. The admiral had been anxious to remove the settlement to a more healthy and advantageous situation. He was desirous also of carrying home some conclusive proof of the riches of the island, as the most effectual means of silencing the cavils of his enemies. If the representations of Miguel Diaz were correct, here was a means of effecting both these purposes. Measures were immediately taken to ascertain the truth. The Adelantado set forth in person to visit the river Ozema, accompanied by Miguel Diaz, Francisco de Garay, and the Indian guides, and attended by a number of men well armed. They proceeded from Isabella to Magdalena, and thence across the Royal Vega to the fortress of Conception. Continuing on to the south, they came to a range of mountains, which they traversed by a defile two leagues in length, and descended into another beautiful plain, which was called Bonao. Proceeding hence for some distance, they came to a great river called Hayna, running through a fertile country, all the streams of which abounded in gold. On the western bank of this river, and about eight leagues from its mouth, they found gold in greater quantities and in larger particles than had yet been met with in any part of the island, not even excepting the province of Cibao. They made experiments in various places within the compass of six miles, and always with success. The soil seemed to be generally impregnated with that metal, so that a common laborer, with little trouble, might find the amount of three drachms in the course of

a day.* In several places they observed deep excavations in the form of pits, which looked as if the mines had been worked in ancient times; a circumstance which caused much speculation among the Spaniards, the natives having no idea of mining, but contenting themselves with the particles found on the surface of the soil, or in the beds of the rivers.

The Indians of the neighborhood received the white men with their promised friendship, and in every respect the representations of Miguel Diaz were fully justified. He was not only pardoned, but received into great favor, and was subsequently employed in various capacities in the island, in all which he acquitted himself with great fidelity. He kept his faith with his Indian bride, by whom, according to Oviedo, he had two children. Charlevoix supposes that they were regularly married, as the female cacique appears to have been baptized, being always mentioned by the Christian name of Catalina.†

When the Adelantado returned with this favorable report, and with specimens of ore, the anxious heart of the admiral was greatly elated. He gave orders that a fortress should be immediately erected on the banks of the Hayna, in the vicinity of the mines, and that they should be diligently worked. The fancied traces of ancient excavations gave rise to one of his usual veins of golden conjectures. He had already surmised that Hispaniola might be the ancient Ophir. He now flattered himself that he had discovered the identical mines, whence King Solomon had procured his gold for the building of the temple of Jerusalem. He supposed that his ships must have sailed by the gulf of Per-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. ii. cap. 18. Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv.

† Oviedo, Cronica de los Ind., lib ii. cap. 13. Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib. ii. p. 146.

sia, and round Trapoban to this island,* which, according to his idea, lay opposite to the extreme end of Asia, for such he firmly believed the island of Cuba.

It is probable that Columbus gave free license to his imagination in these conjectures, which tended to throw a splendor about his enterprises, and to revive the languishing interest of the public. Granting, however, the correctness of his opinion, that he was in the vicinity of Asia, an error by no means surprising in the imperfect state of geographical knowledge, all his consequent suppositions were far from extravagant. The ancient Ophir was believed to lie somewhere in the East, but its situation was a matter of controversy among the learned, and remains one of those conjectural questions about which too much has been written for it ever to be satisfactorily decided.

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv.

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

RETURN OF COLUMBUS TO SPAIN WITH AGUADO.

[1496.]

THE new caravel, the Santa Cruz, being finished, and the Niña repaired, Columbus made every arrangement for immediate departure, anxious to be freed from the growing arrogance of Aguado, and to relieve the colony from a crew of factious and discontented men. He appointed his brother, Don Bartholomew, to the command of the island, with the title, which he had already given him, of Adelantado: in case of his death, he was to be succeeded by his brother Don Diego.

On the 10th of March the two caravels set sail for Spain, in one of which Columbus embarked, and in the other Aguado. In consequence of the orders of the sovereigns, all those who could be spared from the island, and some who had wives and relatives in Spain whom they wished to visit, returned in these caravels, which were crowded with two hundred and twenty-five passengers, the sick, the idle, the profligate, and the factious. Never did a more miserable and disappointed crew return from a land of promise.

There were thirty Indians also on board of the caravels, among whom were the once redoubtable cacique Caonabo, one of his brothers, and a nephew. The curate of Los Palacios observes that Columbus had promised the cacique and his brother to restore them to their country and their power, after he had taken them to visit the King and Queen of Castile.* It is probable that by kind treatment and by a display of the wonders of Spain and the grandeur and might of its sovereigns, he hoped to conquer their enmity to the Spaniards, and convert them into important instruments towards obtaining a secure and peaceable dominion over the island. Caonabo, however, was of that proud nature, of wild but vigorous growth, which can never be tamed. He remained a moody and dejected captive. He had too much intelligence not to perceive that his power was for ever blasted, but he retained his haughtiness, even in the midst of his despair.

Being, as yet, but little experienced in the navigation of these seas, Columbus, instead of working up to the northward, so as to fall in with the tract of westerly winds, took an easterly course on leaving the island. The consequence was, that almost the whole of his voyage was a toilsome and tedious struggle against the trade-winds and calms which prevail between the tropics. On the 6th of April he found himself still in the vicinity of the Caribbee islands, with his crews fatigued and sickly, and his provisions rapidly diminishing. He bore away to the southward, therefore, to touch at the most important of those islands, in search of supplies.

On Saturday the 9th, he anchored at Marigalante, whence, on the following day, he made sail for Guadaloupe. It was contrary to the custom of Columbus to weigh anchor on Sunday when in

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131.

port, but the people murmured, and observed, that when in quest of food, it was no time to stand on scruples as to holy days.*

Anchoring off the island of Guadaloupe, the boat was sent on shore well armed. Before it could reach the land, a large number of females issued from the woods, armed with bows and arrows, and decorated with tufts of feathers, preparing to oppose any descent upon their shores. As the sea was somewhat rough, and a surf broke upon the beach, the boats remained at a distance, and two of the Indians from Hispaniola swam to shore Having explained to these Amazons that the Spaniards only sought provisions, in exchange for which they would give articles of great value, the women referred them to their husbands, who were at the northern end of the island. As the boats proceeded thither, numbers of the natives were seen on the beach, who manifested great ferocity, shouting, and yelling, and discharging flights of arrows, which, however, fell far short in the water. Seeing the boats approach the land, they hid themselves in the adjacent forest, and rushed forth with hideous cries as the Spaniards were landing. A discharge of firearms drove them to the woods and mountains, and the boats met with no further opposition. Entering the deserted habitations, the Spaniards began to plunder and destroy, contrary to the invariable injunctions of the admiral. Among other articles found in these houses, were honey and wax, which Herrera supposes had been brought from Terra Firma, as these roving people collected the productions of distant regions in the course of their expeditions. Fernando Columbus mentions likewise that there were hatchets of iron in their houses: these, however, must have been made of a species of hard and heavy stone, already mentioned, which resembled iron; or they must

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 62.

have been procured from places which the Spaniards had previously visited, as it is fully admitted that no iron was in use among the natives prior to the discovery. The sailors also reported that in one of the houses they found the arm of a man roasting on a spit before a fire; but these facts, so repugnant to humanity, require more solid authority to be credited: the sailors had committed wanton devastations in these dwellings, and may have sought a pretext with which to justify their maraudings to the admiral.

While some of the people were getting wood and water, and making cassava bread, Columbus dispatched forty men, well armed, to explore the interior of the island. They returned on the following day with ten women and three boys. The women were of large and powerful form, yet of great agility. They were naked, and wore their long hair flowing loose upon their shoulders; some decorated their heads with plumes of various colors. Among them was the wife of a cacique, a woman of great strength and proud spirit. On the approach of the Spaniards, she had fled with an agility which soon left all her pursuers far behind, excepting a native of the Canary islands remarkable for swiftness of foot. She would have escaped even from him, but, perceiving that he was alone, and far from his companions, she turned suddenly upon him, seized him with astonishing force, and would have strangled him, had not the Spaniards arrived and taken her entangled like a hawk with her prey. The warlike spirit of these Carib women, and the circumstance of finding them in armed bands, defending their shores, during the absence of their husbands, led Columbus repeatedly into the erroneous idea, that certain of these islands were inhabited entirely by women; for which error, as has already been observed, he was prepared

by the stories of Marco Polo concerning an island of Amazons near the coast of Asia.

Having remained several days at the island, and prepared three weeks' supply of bread, Columbus prepared to make sail. As Guadaloupe was the most important of the Caribbee Islands, and in a manner the portal or entrance to all the rest, he wished to secure the friendship of the inhabitants. He dismissed, therefore, all the prisoners, with many presents, to compensate for the spoil and injury which had been done. The female cacique, however, declined going on shore, preferring to remain and accompany the natives of Hispaniola who were on board, keeping with her also a young daughter. She had conceived a passion for Caonabo, having found out that he was a native of the Caribbee Islands. His character and story, gathered from the other Indians, had won the sympathy and admiration of this intrepid woman.*

Leaving Guadaloupe on the 20th of April, and keeping in about the twenty-second degree of latitude, the caravels again worked their way against the whole current of the trade-winds, insomuch, that, on the 20th of May, after a month of great fatigue and toil, they had yet a great part of their voyage to make. The provisions were already so reduced, that Columbus had to put every one on a daily allowance of six ounces of bread and a pint and a half of water: as they advanced, the scarcity grew more and more severe, and was rendered more appalling from the uncertainty which prevailed on board the vessels as to their situation. There were several pilots in the caravels; but being chiefly accustomed to the navigation of the Mediterranean, or the Atlantic coasts, they were utterly confounded, and lost all reckoning when

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 63.

traversing the broad ocean. Every one had a separate opinion, and none heeded that of the admiral. By the beginning of June there was an absolute famine on board of the ships. In the extremity of their sufferings, while death stared them in the face, it was proposed by some of the Spaniards, as a desperate alternative, that they should kill and eat their Indian prisoners; others suggested that they should throw them into the sea, as so many expensive and useless mouths. Nothing but the absolute authority of Columbus prevented this last counsel from being adopted. He represented that the Indians were their fellow-beings, some of them Christians like themselves, and all entitled to similar treatment. He exhorted them to a little patience, assuring them that they would soon make land, for that, according to his reckoning, they were not far from Cape St. Vincent. At this all scoffed, for they believed themselves yet far from their desired haven; some affirming that they were in the English channel, others that they were approaching Gallicia; when Columbus, therefore, confident in his opinion, ordered that sail should be taken in at night, lest they should come upon the land in the dark, there was a general murmur; the men exclaiming that it was better to be cast on shore, than to starve at sea. The next morning, however, to their great joy, they came in sight of the very land which Columbus had predicted. From this time, he was regarded by the seamen as deeply versed in the mysteries of the ocean, and almost oracular in matters of navigation.*

On the 11th of June, the vessels anchored in the bay of Cadiz, after a weary voyage of about three months. In the course of this voyage, the unfortunate Caonabo expired. It is by the mere casual mention of contemporay writers, that we have any notice

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 63.

of this circumstance, which appears to have been passed over as a matter of but little moment. He maintained his haughty nature to the last, for his death is principally ascribed to the morbid melancholy of a proud but broken spirit.* He was an extraordinary character in savage life. From being a simple Carib warrior, he had risen, by his enterprise and courage, to be the most powerful cacique, and the dominant spirit of the populous island of Hayti. He was the only chieftain that appeared to have had sagacity sufficient to foresee the fatal effects of Spanish ascendency, or military talent to combine any resistance to its inroads. Had his warriors been of his own intrepid nature, the war which he raised would have been formidable in the extreme. His fate furnishes, on a narrow scale, a lesson to human greatness. When the Spaniards first arrived on the coast of Hayti, their imaginations were inflamed with rumors of a magnificent prince in the interior, the lord of the Golden House, the sovereign of the mines of Cibao, who reigned in splendid state among the mountains; but a short time had elapsed, and this fancied potentate of the East, stripped of every illusion, was a naked and dejected prisoner on the deck of one of their caravels, with none but one of his own wild native heroines to sympathize in his misfortunes. All his importance vanished with his freedom; scarce any mention is made of him during his captivity, and with innate qualities of a high and heroic nature, he perished with the obscurity of one of the vulgar.

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131. Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv. Some have affirmed that Caonabo perished in one of the caravels which foundered in the harbor of Isabella during the hurricane, but the united testimony of the curate of Los Palacios, Peter Martyr and Fernando Columbus, proves that he sailed with the admiral in his return voyage.

CHAPTER II.

DECLINE OF THE POPULARITY OF COLUMBUS IN SPAIN.—HIS RECEPTION BY THE SOVEREIGNS AT BURGOS.—HE PROPOSES A THIRD VOYAGE.

Envy and malice had been but too successful in undermining the popularity of Columbus. It is impossible to keep up a state of excitement for any length of time, even by miracles. The world, at first, is prompt and lavish in its admiration, but soon grows cool, distrusts its late enthusiasm, and fancies it has been defrauded of what it bestowed with such prodigality. It is then that the caviler who had been silenced by the general applause, puts in his insidious suggestion, detracts from the merit of the declining favorite, and succeeds in rendering him an object of doubt and censure, if not of absolute aversion. In three short years, the public had become familiar with the stupendous wonder of a newly-discovered world, and was now open to every insinuation derogatory to the fame of the discoverer and the importance of his enterprises.

The circumstances which attended the present arrival of Columbus were little calculated to diminish the growing prejudices of the populace. When the motley crowd of mariners and adventurers who had embarked with such sanguine expectations landed from the vessels in the port of Cadiz instead of a joyous crew,

bounding on shore, flushed with success, and laden with the spoils of the golden Indies, a feeble train of wretched men crawled forth, emaciated by the diseases of the colony and the hardships of the voyage, who carried in their yellow countenances, says an old writer, a mockery of that gold which had been the object of their search, and who had nothing to relate of the New World, but tales of sickness, poverty, and disappointment.

Columbus endeavored, as much as possible, to counteract these unfavorable appearances, and to revive the languishing enthusiasm of the public. He dwelt upon the importance of his recent discoveries along the coast of Cuba, where, as he supposed, he had arrived nearly to the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients, bordering on some of the richest provinces of Asia. Above all, he boasted of his discovery of the abundant mines on the south side of Hispaniola, which he persuaded himself were those of the ancient Ophir. The public listened to these accounts with sneering incredulity; or if for a moment a little excitement was occasioned, it was quickly destroyed by gloomy pictures drawn by disappointed adventurers.

In the harbor of Cadiz Columbus found three caravels, commanded by Pedro Alonzo Niño, on the point of sailing with supplies for the colony. Nearly a year had elapsed without any relief of the kind; four caravels which had sailed in the preceding January having been lost on the coast of the Peninsula.* Having read the royal letters and dispatches of which Niño was the bearer, and being informed of the wishes of the sovereigns, as well as of the state of the public mind, Columbus wrote by this opportunity, urging the Adelantado to endeavor, by every means, to bring the island into a peaceful and productive state, appeasing

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, lib. vi

all discontents and commotions, and seizing and sending to Spain all caciques, or their subjects, who should be concerned in the deaths of any of the colonists. He recommended the most unremitting diligence in exploring and working the mines recently discovered on the river Hayna, and that a place should be chosen in the neighborhood, and a sea-port founded. Pedro Alonzo Niño set sail with the three caravels on the 17th of June.

Tidings of the arrival of Columbus having reached the sovereigns, he received a gracious letter from them, dated at Almazen, 12th July, 1496; congratulating him on his safe return, and inviting him to court when he should have recovered from the fatigues of his voyage. The kind terms in which this letter was couched were calculated to reassure the heart of Columbus, who, ever since the mission of the arrogant Aguado, had considered himself out of favor with the sovereigns, and fallen into disgrace. As a proof of the dejection of his spirits, we are told that when he made his appearance this time in Spain, he was clad in a humble garb, resembling in form and color the habit of a Franciscan monk, simply girded with a cord, and that he had suffered his beard to grow like the brethren of that order.* This was probably in fulfillment of some penitential vow made in a moment of danger or despondency,—a custom prevalent in those days, and frequently observed by Columbus. It betokened, however, much humility and depression of spirit, and afforded a striking contrast to his appearance on his former triumphant return. He was doomed, in fact, to yield repeated examples of the reverses to which those are subject who have once launched from the safe shores of obscurity on the fluctuating waves of popular opinion

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131. Oviedo, lib. ii. cap. 13.

However indifferent Columbus might be to his own personal appearance, he was anxious to keep alive the interest in his discoveries, fearing continually that the indifference awakening towards him might impede their accomplishment. On his way to Burgos, therefore, where the sovereigns were expected, he made a studious display of the curiosities and treasures which he had brought from the New World. Among these were collars, bracelets, anklets, and coronets of gold, the spoils of various caciques, and which were considered as trophies won from barbaric princes of the rich coasts of Asia, or the islands of the Indian seas. It is a proof of the petty standard by which the sublime discovery of Columbus was already estimated, that he had to resort to this management to dazzle the gross perceptions of the multitude by the mere glare of gold.

He carried with him several Indians also, decorated after their savage fashion, and glittering with golden ornaments; among whom were the brother and nephew of Caonabo, the former about thirty years of age, the latter only ten. They were brought merely to visit the king and queen, that they might be impressed with an idea of the grandeur and power of the Spanish sovereigns, after which they were to be restored in safety to their country. Whenever they passed through any principal place, Columbus put a massive collar and chain of gold upon the brother of Caonabo, as being cacique of the golden country of Cibao. The curate of Los Palacios, who entertained the discoverer and his Indian captives for several days in his house, says that he had this chain of gold in his hands, and that it weighed six hundred castellanos.* The worthy curate likewise makes mention of va-

* Equivalent to the value of three thousand one hundred and ninety-five dollars of the present time.

rious Indian masks and images of wood or cotton, wrought with fantastic faces of animals, all of which he supposed were representations of the devil, who he concludes must be the object of adoration of these islanders.*

The reception of Columbus by the sovereigns was different from what he had anticipated; for he was treated with distinguished favor, nor was any mention made either of the complaints of Margarite and Boyle, or the judicial inquiries conducted by Aguado. However these may have had a transient effect on the minds of the sovereigns, they were too conscious of the great deserts of Columbus, and the extraordinary difficulties of his situation, not to tolerate what they may have considered errors on his part.

Encouraged by the favorable countenance he experienced, and by the interest with which the sovereigns listened to his account of his recent voyage along the coast of Cuba, and the discovery of the mines of Hayna, which he failed not to represent as the Ophir of the ancients; Columbus now proposed a further enterprise, by which he promised to make yet more extensive discoveries, and to annex Terra Firma to their dominions. For this purpose he asked eight ships; two to be dispatched to the island of Hispaniola with supplies, the remaining six to be put under his command for a voyage of discovery. The sovereigns readily promised to comply with his request, and were probably sincere in their intentions to do so, but in the performance of their promise Columbus was doomed to meet with intolerable delay; partly in consequence of the operation of public events, partly in consequence of the intrigues of men of office, the two great influences which are continually diverting and defeating the designs of princes.

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131.

The resources of Spain were, at this moment, tasked to the utmost by the ambition of Ferdinand, who lavished all his revenues in warlike expenses and in subsidies. While maintaining a contest of deep and artful policy with France, with the ultimate him of grasping the sceptre of Naples, he was laying the foundation of a wide and powerful connexion by the marriages of the royal children, who were now maturing in years. At this time arose that family alliance, which afterwards consolidated such an immense empire under his grandson and successor, Charles V.

While a large army was maintained in Italy, under Gonsalvo of Cordova, to assist the king of Naples in recovering his throne, of which he had been suddenly dispossessed by Charles VIII of France, other armies were required on the frontiers of Spain, which were menaced with a French invasion. Squadrons also had to be employed for the safeguard of the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of the Peninsula, while a magnificent armada of upwards of a hundred ships, having on board twenty thousand persons, many of them of the first nobility, was dispatched to convoy the Princess Juana to Flanders, to be married to Philip, Archduke of Austria, and to bring back his sister Margarita, the destined bride of Prince Juan.

These widely-extended operations, both of war and amity, put all the land and naval forces into requisition. They drained the royal treasury, and engrossed the thoughts of the sovereigns, obliging them also to journey from place to place in their dominions. With such cares of an immediate and homefelt nature pressing upon their minds, the distant enterprises of Columbus were easily neglected or postponed. They had hitherto been sources of expense instead of profit; and there were artful counselors ever ready to whisper in the royal ear, that they were

likely to continue so. What, in the ambitious eyes of Ferdinand, was the acquisition of a number of wild, uncultivated, and distant islands, to that of the brilliant domain of Naples; or the intercourse with naked and barbaric princes, to that of an alliance with the most potent sovereigns of Christendom? Columbus had the mortification, therefore, to see armies levied and squadrons employed in idle contests about a little point of territory in Europe, and a vast armada of upwards of a hundred sail destined to the ostentatious service of convoying a royal bride; while he vainly solicited a few caravels to prosecute his discovery of a world.

At length, in the autumn, six millions of maravedies were ordered to be advanced to Columbus for the equipment of his promised squadron.* Just as the sum was about to be delivered, a letter was received from Pedro Alonzo Niño, who had arrived at Cadiz with his three caravels, on his return from the island of Hispaniola. Instead of proceeding to court in person, or forwarding the dispatches of the Adelantado, he had gone to visit his family at Huelva, taking the dispatches with him, and merely writing in a vaunting style, that he had a great amount of gold on board of his ships.†

This was triumphant intelligence to Columbus, who immediately concluded that the new mines were in operation, and the treasures of Ophir about to be realized. The letter of Niño, however, was fated to have a most injurious effect on his concerns.

The king at that moment was in immediate want of money, to repair the fortress of Salza, in Roussillon, which had been sacked by the French; the six millions of maravedies about to be advanced to Columbus, were forthwith appropriated to patch up the

* Equivalent to 86,956 dollars of the present day.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 123, MS.

shattered castle, and an order was given for the amount to be paid out of the gold brought by Niño. It was not until the end of December, when Niño arrived at court, and delivered the dispatches of the Adelantado, that his boast of gold was discovered to be a mere figure of speech, and that his caravels were, in fact, freighted with Indian prisoners, from the sale of whom the vaunted gold was to arise.

It is difficult to describe the vexatious effects of this absurd hyperbole. The hopes of Columbus, of great and immediate profit from the mines, were suddenly cast down; the zeal of his few advocates was cooled; an air of empty exaggeration was given to his enterprises; and his enemies pointed with scorn and ridicule to the wretched cargoes of the caravels, as the boasted treasures of the New World. The report brought by Niño and his crew, represented the colony as in a disastrous condition, and the dispatches of the Adelantado pointed out the importance of immediate supplies; but in proportion as the necessity of the case was urgent, the measure of relief was tardy. All the unfavorable representations hitherto made seemed corroborated, and the invidious cry of "great cost and little gain" was revived by those politicians of petty sagacity and microscopic eye, who, in all great undertakings, can discern the immediate expense, without having scope of vision to embrace the future profit.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR A THIRD VOYAGE.—DISAPPOINTMENTS AND DELAYS.

[1497.]

It was not until the following spring of 1497, that the concerns of Columbus and of the New World began to receive serious attention from the sovereigns. The fleet had returned from Flanders with the Princess Margarita of Austria. Her nuptials with Prince Juan, the heir-apparent, had been celebrated at Burgos, the capital of Old Castile, with extraordinary splendor. All the grandees, the dignitaries, and chivalry of Spain, together with ambassadors from the principal potentates of Christendom, were assembled on the occasion. Burgos was for some time a scene of chivalrous pageant and courtly revel, and the whole kingdom celebrated with great rejoicings this powerful alliance, which seemed to insure to the Spanish sovereigns a continuance of their extraordinary prosperity.

In the midst of these festivities, Isabella, whose maternal heart had recently been engrossed by the marriages of her children, now that she was relieved from these concerns of a tender and domestic nature, entered into the affairs of the New World with a spirit that showed she was determined to place them upon

a substantial foundation, as well as clearly to define the powers, and reward the services of Columbus. To her protecting zeal all the provisions in favor of Columbus must be attributed; for the king began to look coldly on him, and the royal counselors, who had most influence in the affairs of the Indies, were his enemies.

Various royal ordinances dated about this time manifest the generous and considerate disposition of the queen. The rights, privileges, and dignities granted to Columbus at Santa Fé, were again confirmed; a tract of land in Hispaniola, fifty leagues in length, and twenty-five in breadth, was offered to him with the title of duke or marquess. This, however, Columbus had the forbearance to decline; he observed that it would only increase the envy which was already so virulent against him, and would cause new misrepresentations; as he should be accused of paying more attention to the settlement and improvement of his own possessions, than of any other part of the island.*

As the expenses of the expeditions had hitherto far exceeded the returns, Columbus had incurred debt rather than reaped profit from the share he had been permitted to take in them; he was relieved, therefore, from his obligation to bear an eighth part of the cost of the past enterprises, excepting the sum which he had advanced towards the first voyage; at the same time, however, he was not to claim any share of what had hitherto been brought from the island. For three ensuing years he was to be allowed an eighth of the gross proceeds of every voyage, and an additional tenth after the costs had been deducted. After the expiration of the three years, the original terms of agreement were to be resumed.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 123.

To gratify his honorable ambition also, and to perpetuate in his family the distinction gained by his illustrious deeds, he was allowed the right of establishing a mayorazgo, or perpetual entail of his estates, so that they might always descend with his titles of nobility. This he shortly after exercised in a solemn testament executed at Seville in the early part of 1498, by which he devised his estates to his own male descendants, and on their failure to the male descendants of his brothers, and in default of male heirs to the females of his lineage.

The heir was always to bear the arms of the admiral, to seal with them, to sign with his signature, and in signing, never to use any other title than simply "The Admiral," whatever other titles might be given him by the king, and used by him on other occasions. Such was the noble pride with which he valued this title of his real greatness.

In this testament he made ample provision for his brother, the Adelantado, his son Fernando, and his brother Don Diego, the last of whom, he intimates, had a desire to enter into ecclesiastical life. He ordered that a tenth part of the revenues arising from the mayorazgo should be devoted to pious and charitable purposes, and in relieving all poor persons of his lineage. He made provisions for the giving of marriage-portions to the poor females of his family. He ordered that a married person of his kindred who had been born in his native city of Genoa, should be maintained there in competence and respectability, by way of keeping a domicil for the family there; and he commanded whoever should inherit the mayorazgo, always to do every thing in his power for the honor, prosperity, and increase of the city of Genoa, provided it should not be contrary to the service of the church, and the interests of the Spanish crown. Among various

other provisions in this will, he solemnly provides for his favorite scheme, the recovery of the holy sepulchre. He orders his son Diego, or whoever else may inherit his estate, to invest from time to time as much money as he can spare, in stock in the bank of St. George at Genoa, to form a permanent fund, with which he is to stand ready at any time to follow and serve the king in the conquest of Jerusalem. Or should the king not undertake such enterprise, then, when the funds have accumulated to sufficient amount, to set on foot a crusade at his own charge and risk, in hopes that, seeing his determination, the sovereigns may be induced either to adopt the undertaking, or to authorize him to pursue it in their name.

Beside this special undertaking for the Catholic faith, he charges his heir in case there should arise any schism in the church, or any violence menacing its prosperity, to throw himself at the feet of the pope, and devote his person and property to defend the church from all insult and spoliation. Next to the service of God, he enjoins loyalty to the throne; commanding him at all times to serve the sovereigns and their heirs, faithfully and zealously, even to the loss of life and estate. To insure the constant remembrance of this testament, he orders his heir that, before he confesses, he shall give it to his father confessor to read, who is to examine him upon his faithful fulfillment of its conditions.*

As Columbus had felt aggrieved by the general license granted in April, 1495, to make discoveries in the New World, considering it as interfering with his prerogatives, a royal edict was issued on the 2d of June, 1497, retracting whatever might be prejudicial to his interests, or to the previous grants made him

* This testament is inserted at large in the Appendix.

by the crown. "It never was our intention," said the sovereigns in their edict, "in any way to affect the rights of the said Don Christopher Columbus, nor to allow the conventions, privileges, and favors which we have granted him to be encroached upon or violated; but on the contrary, in consequence of the services which he has rendered us, we intend to confer still further favors on him." Such, there is every reason to believe, was the sincere intention of the magnanimous Isabella; but the stream of her royal bounty was poisoned or diverted by the base channels through which it flowed.

The favor shown to Columbus was extended likewise to his family. The titles and prerogatives of Adelantado with which he had invested his brother Don Bartholomew, had at first awakened the displeasure of the king, who jealously reserved all high dignities of the kind to be granted exclusively by the crown. By a royal letter, the office was now conferred upon Don Bartholomew, as if through spontaneous favor of the sovereigns, no allusion being made to his having previously enjoyed it.

While all these measures were taken for the immediate gratification of Columbus, others were adopted for the interests of the colony. Permission was granted him to take out three hundred and thirty persons in royal pay, of whom forty were to be escuderos or servants, one hundred foot-soldiers, thirty sailors, thirty ship-boys, twenty miners, fifty husbandmen, ten gardeners, twenty mechanics of various kinds, and thirty females. He was subsequently permitted to increase the number, if he thought proper, to five hundred; but the additional individuals were to be paid out of the produce and merchandise of the colony. He was likewise authorized to grant lands to all such as were disposed to cultivate vineyards, orchards, sugar plantations, or to form any

other rural establishments, on condition that they should reside as householders on the island for four years after such grant and that all the brazil-wood and precious metals, found on their lands, should be reserved to the crown.

Nor were the interests of the unhappy natives forgotten by the compassionate heart of Isabella. Notwithstanding the sophisms by which their subjection and servitude were made matters of civil and divine right, and sanctioned by the political prelates of the day, Isabella always consented with the greatest reluctance to the slavery even of those who were taken in open warfare; while her utmost solicitude was exerted to protect the unoffending part of this helpless and devoted race. She ordered that the greatest care should be taken of their religious instruction, and the greatest leniency shown in collecting the tributes imposed upon them, with all possible indulgence to defalcators. In fact, the injunctions given with respect to the treatment both of Indians and Spaniards, are the only indications, in the royal edicts, of any impression having been made by the complaints against Columbus of severity in his government. It was generally recommended by the sovereigns, that, whenever the public safety did not require stern measures, there should be manifested a disposition to lenity and easy rule.

When every intention was thus shown on the part of the crown to dispatch the expedition to the colony, unexpected difficulties arose on the part of the public. The charm was dispelled which in the preceding voyage had made every adventurer crowd into the service of Columbus. An odium had been industriously thrown upon his enterprises; and his new-found world, instead of a region of wealth and delight, was considered a land of poverty and disaster. There was a difficulty in procuring either

ships or men for the voyage. To remedy the first of these deficiencies, one of those arbitrary orders was issued, so opposite to our present ideas of commercial policy, empowering the officers of the crown to press into the service whatever ships they might judge suitable for the purposed expedition, together with their masters and pilots; and to fix such price for their remuneration, as the officers should deem just and reasonable. To supply the want of voluntary recruits, a measure was adopted at the suggestion of Columbus,* which shows the desperate alternatives to which he was reduced by the great reaction of public sentiment. This was, to commute the sentences of criminals condemned to banishment, to the galleys, or to the mines, into transportation to the new settlements, where they were to labor in the public service without pay. Those whose sentence was banishment for life, to be transported for ten years; those banished for a specific term, to be transported for half that time. A general pardon was published for all malefactors at large, who within a certain time should surrender themselves to the admiral, and embark for the colonies; those who had committed offences meriting death, to serve for two years, those whose misdeeds were of a lighter nature, to serve for one year.† Those only were excepted from this indulgence who had committed heresy, treason, coining, murder, and certain other specific crimes. This pernicious measure, calculated to poison the population of an infant community at its very source, was a fruitful cause of trouble to Columbus, and of misery and detriment to the colony. It has been frequently adopted by various nations, whose superior experience should have taught them better, and has proved the bane of many a rising

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 112, MS. † Muños, lib. vi. § 19.

settlement. It is assuredly as unnatural for a metropolis to cast forth its crimes and vices upon its colonies, as it would be for a parent willfully to ingraft disease upon his children. In both instances the obligation of nature is vitiated; nor should it be matter of surprise, if the seeds of evil thus sown should bring forth bitter retribution.

Notwithstanding all these violent expedients, there was still a ruinous delay in fitting out the expedition. This is partly accounted for by changes which took place in the persons appointed to superintend the affairs of the Indies. These concerns had for a time been consigned to Antonio de Torres, in whose name, conjointly with that of Columbus, many of the official documents had been made out. In consequence of high and unreasonable demands on the part of Torres, he was removed from office, and Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Badajos, reinstated. The papers had, therefore, to be made out anew, and fresh contracts formed. While these concerns were tardily attended to, the queen was suddenly overwhelmed with affliction by the death of her only son Prince Juan, whose nuptials had been celebrated with such splendor in the spring. It was the first of a series of domestic calamities which assailed her affectionate heart, and overwhelmed her with affliction for the remainder of her days. In the midst of her distress, however, she still thought of Columbus. In consequence of his urgent representations of the misery to which the colony must be reduced, two ships were dispatched in the beginning of 1498, under the command of Pedro Fernandez Coronel, freighted with supplies. The necessary funds were advanced by the queen herself, out of the moneys intended to form the endowment of her daughter Isabella, then betrothed to Emanuel, King of Portugal. An instance of her kind feeling toward

Columbus was also evinced in the time of her affliction: his two sons, Diego and Fernando, had been pages to the deceased prince; the queen now took them, in the same capacity, into her own service.

With all this zealous disposition on the part of the queen, Columbus still met with the most injurious and discouraging delays in preparing the six remaining vessels for his voyage. His cold-blooded enemy Fonseca, having the superintendence of Indian affairs, was enabled to impede and retard all his plans. The various petty officers and agents employed in the concerns of the armament, were many of them minions of the bishop, and knew that they were gratifying him in annoying Columbus. They looked upon the latter as a man declining in popularity, who might be offended with impunity; they scrupled not, therefore, to throw all kinds of difficulties in his path, and to treat him occasionally with that arrogance which petty and ignoble men in place are prone to exercise.

It seems almost incredible at the present day that such important and glorious enterprises should have been subject to such despicable molestations. Columbus bore them all with silent indignation. He was a stranger in the land he was benefiting; he felt that the popular tide was setting against him, and that it was necessary to tolerate many present grievances for the sake of effecting his great purposes. So wearied and disheartened, however, did he become by the impediments artfully thrown in his way, and so disgusted by the prejudices of the fickle public, that he at one time thought of abandoning his discoveries altogether. He was chiefly induced to persevere by his grateful attachment to the queen, and his desire to achieve something that might cheer and animate her under her afflictions.*

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

At length, after all kinds of irritating delays, the six vessels were fitted for sea, though it was impossible to conquer the popular repugnance to the service, sufficiently to enlist the allotted number of men. In addition to the persons in employ already enumerated, a physician, surgeon, and apothecary were sent out for the relief of the colony, and several priests to replace Friar Boyle and certain of his discontented brethren; while a number of musicians were embarked by the admiral, to cheer and enliven the colonists.

The insolence which Columbus had suffered from the minions of Fonseca throughout this long protracted time of preparation, harassed him to the last moment of his sojourn in Spain, and followed him to the very water's edge. Among the worthless hirelings who had annoyed him, the most noisy and presuming was one Ximeno Breviesca, treasurer or accountant of Fonseca. He was not an old Christian, observes the venerable Las Casas; by which it is to be understood that he was either a Jew or a Moor converted to the Catholic faith. He had an impudent front and an unbridled tongue, and, echoing the sentiments of his patron the bishop, had been loud in his abuse of the admiral and his enterprises. The very day when the squadron was on the point of weighing anchor, Columbus was assailed by the insolence of this Ximeno, either on the shore when about to embark, or on board of his ship where he had just entered. In the hurry of the moment, he forgot his usual self-command; his indignation, hitherto repressed, suddenly burst forth; he struck the despicable minion to the ground, and kicked him repeatedly, venting in this unguarded paroxysm the accumulated griefs and vexations which had long rankled in his mind.*

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 126, MS.

Nothing could demonstrate more strongly what Columbus had previously suffered from the machinations of unworthy men, than this transport of passion, so unusual in his well-governed temper. He deeply regretted it, and in a letter written some time afterwards to the sovereigns, he endeavored to obviate the injury it might do him in their opinion, through the exaggeration and false coloring of his enemies. His apprehensions were not ill-founded, for Las Casas attributes the humiliating measures shortly after adopted by the sovereigns toward Columbus, to the unfavorable impression produced by this affair. It had happened near at home, as it were, under the very eye of the sovereigns; it spoke, therefore, more quickly to their feelings than more important allegations from a distance. The personal castigation of a public officer was represented as a flagrant instance of the vindictive temper of Columbus, and a corroboration of the charges of cruelty and oppression sent from the colony. As Ximeno was a creature of the invidious Fonseca, the affair was represented to the sovereigns in the most odious point of view. Thus the generous intentions of princes, and the exalted services of their subjects, are apt to be defeated by the intervention of cold and crafty men in place. By his implacable hostility to Columbus, and the secret obstructions which he threw in the way of the most illustrious of human enterprises Fonseca has insured perpetuity to his name, coupled with the contempt of every generous mind.

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FROM SPAIN ON HIS THIRD VOYAGE.—DISCOVERY OF TRINIDAD

[1498.]

On the 30th of May, 1498, Columbus set sail from the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, with his squadron of six vessels, on his third voyage of discovery. The route he proposed to take was different from that pursued in his former voyages. He intended to depart from the Cape de Verde Islands, sailing to the southwest until he should come under the equinoctial line, then to steer directly westward with the favor of the trade-winds, until he should arrive at land, or find himself in the longitude of Hispaniola. Various considerations induced him to adopt this course. In his preceding voyage, when he coasted the southern side of Cuba, under the belief that it was the continent of Asia, he had observed that it swept off toward the south. From this circumstance, and from information gathered among the natives of the Caribbee Islands, he was induced to believe that a great tract of the main land lay to the south of the countries he had already discovered. King John II of Portugal, appears to have

entertained a similar idea; as Herrera records an opinion expressed by that monarch, that there was a continent in the southern ocean.* If this were the case, it was supposed by Columbus, that, in proportion as he approached the equator, and extended his discoveries to climates more and more under the torrid influence of the sun, he should find the productions of nature sublimated by its rays to more perfect and precious qualities. He was strengthened in this belief by a letter written to him at the command of the queen, by one Jayme Ferrer, an eminent and learned lapidary, who, in the course of his trading for precious stones and metals, had been in the Levant and in various parts of the East; had conversed with the merchants of the remote parts of Asia and Africa, and the natives of India, Arabia, and Ethiopia, and was considered deeply versed in geography generally, but especially in the natural histories of those countries whence the valuable merchandise in which he dealt was procured. In this letter Ferrer assured Columbus, that, according to his experience, the rarest objects of commerce, such as gold, precious stones, drugs and spices, were chiefly to be found in the regions about the equinoctial line, where the inhabitants were black, or darkly colored; and that until the admiral should arrive among people of such complexions, he did not think he would find these articles in great abundance.†

Columbus expected to find such people more to the south. He recollected that the natives of Hispaniola had spoken of black men who had once come to their island from the south and southeast, the heads of whose javelins were of a sort of metal which they called Guanin. They had given the admiral specimens of

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 9.

† Navarrete, Colec., tom. ii. doc. 68.

this metal, which on being assayed in Spain, proved to be a mixture of eighteen parts gold, six silver, and eight copper, a proof of valuable mines in the country whence they came. Charlevoix conjectures that these black people may have come from the Canaries, or the western coast of Africa, and been driven by tempest to the shores of Hispaniola.* It is probable, however, that Columbus had been misinformed as to their color, or had misunderstood his informants. It is difficult to believe that the natives of Africa, or the Canaries, could have performed a voyage of such magnitude, in the frail and scantily provided barks they were accustomed to use.

It was to ascertain the truth of all these suppositions, and, if correct, to arrive at the favored and opulent countries about the equator, inhabited by people of similar complexions with those of the Africans under the line, that Columbus in his present voyage to the New World, took a course much farther to the south than that which he had hitherto pursued.

Having heard that a French squadron was cruising off Cape St. Vincent, he stood to the southwest after leaving St. Lucar, touching at the islands of Porto Santo and Madeira, where he remained a few days taking in wood and water and other supplies, and then continued his course to the Canary Islands. On the 19th of June, he arrived at Gomara, where there lay at anchor a French cruiser with two Spanish prizes. On seeing the squadron of Columbus standing into the harbor, the captain of the privateer put to sea in all haste, followed by his prizes; one of which, in the hurry of the moment, left part of her crew on shore, making sail with only four of her armament, and six Spanish prisoners. The admiral at first mistook them for merchant ships alarmed by

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib. iii. p. 162.

his warlike appearance; when informed of the truth, however, he sent three of his vessels in pursuit, but they were too distant to be overtaken. The six Spaniards, however, on board of one of the prizes, seeing assistance at hand, rose on their captors, and the admiral's vessel coming up, the prize was retaken, and brought back in triumph to the port. The admiral relinquished the ship to the captain, and gave up the prisoners to the governor of the island, to be exchanged for six Spaniards carried off by the cruiser.*

Leaving Gomara on the 21st of June, Columbus divided his squadron off the island of Ferro: three of his ships he dispatched direct for Hispaniola, to carry supplies to the colony. One of these ships was commanded by Alonzo Sanchez de Caravajal, native of Baeza, a man of much worth and integrity; the second by Pedro de Arana of Cordova, brother of Doña Beatrix Henriquez, the mother of the admiral's second son Fernando. He was cousin also of the unfortunate officer who commanded the fortress of La Navidad at the time of the massacre. The third was commanded by Juan Antonio Columbus (or Colombo), a Genoese, related to the admiral, and a man of much judgment and capacity. These captains were alternately to have the command, and bear the signal light a week at a time. The admiral carefully pointed out their course. When they came in sight of Hispaniola, they were to steer for the south side, for the new port and town, which he supposed to be by this time established in the mouth of the Ozema, according to royal orders sent out by Coronel. With the three remaining vessels, the admiral prosecuted his voyage towards the Cape de Verde Islands. The ship in which he sailed was decked, the other two were merchant cara-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 65.

vels.* As he advanced within the tropics, the change of climate, and the close and sultry weather, brought on a severe attack of the gout, followed by a violent fever. Notwithstanding his painful illness, he enjoyed the full possession of his faculties, and continued to keep his reckoning, and make his observations, with his usual vigilance and minuteness.

On the 27th of June, he arrived among the Cape de Verde Islands, which, instead of the freshness and verdure which their name would betoken, presented an aspect of the most cheerless sterility. He remained among these islands but a very few days, being disappointed in his expectation of obtaining goats' flesh for ships' provisions, and cattle for stock for the island of Hispaniola. To procure them would require some delay; in the meantime the health of himself and of his people suffered under the influence of the weather. The atmosphere was loaded with clouds and vapors; neither sun nor star was to be seen; a sultry, depressing temperature prevailed; and the livid looks of the inhabitants bore witness to the insalubrity of the climate†

Leaving the island of Buena Vista on the 5th of July, Columbus stood to the southwest, intending to continue on until he found himself under the equinoctial line. The currents, however, which ran to the north and northwest among these islands impeded his progress, and kept him for two days in sight of the Island del Fuego. The volcanic summit of this island, which, seen at a distance, resembled a church with a lofty steeple, and which was said at times to emit smoke and flames, was the last point discerned of the Old World.

Continuing to the southwest, about one hundred and twenty

* P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. vi.

† Hist del Almirante, cap. 65.

leagues, he found himself, on the 13th of July, according to his observations, in the fifth degree of north latitude. He had entered that region which extends for eight or ten degrees on each side of the line, and is known among seamen by the name of the calm latitudes. The trade-winds, from the southeast and northeast, meeting in the neighborhood of the equator, neutralize each other, and a steady calmness of the elements is produced. The whole sea is like a mirror, and vessels remain almost motionless, with flapping sails; the crews panting under the heat of a vertical sun, unmitigated by any refreshing breeze. Weeks are sometimes employed in crossing this torpid tract of the ocean.

The weather for some time past had been cloudy and oppressive; but on the 13th there was a bright and burning sun. The wind suddenly fell, and a dead sultry calm commenced, which lasted for eight days. The air was like a furnace; the tar melted, the seams of the ship yawned; the salt meat became putrid; the wheat was parched as if with fire; the hoops shrank from the wine and water-casks, some of which leaked, and others burst; while the heat in the holds of the vessels was so suffocating, that no one could remain below a sufficient time to prevent the damage that was taking place. The mariners lost all strength and spirits, and sank under the oppressive heat. It seemed as if the old fable of the torrid zone was about to be realized; and that they were approaching a fiery region, where it would be impossible to exist. It is true the heavens were, for a great part of the time, overcast, and there were drizzling showers; but the atmosphere was close and stifling, and there was that combination of heat and moisture which relaxes all the energies of the human frame.

During this time, the admiral suffered extremely from the

gout, but, as usual, the activity of his mind, heightened by his anxiety, allowed him no indulgence nor repose. He was in an unknown part of the ocean, where every thing depended upon his vigilance and sagacity; and was continually watching the phenomena of the elements, and looking out for signs of land. Finding the heat so intolerable, he altered his course, and steered to the southwest, hoping to find a milder temperature farther on, even under the same parallel. He had observed, in his previous voyages, that after sailing westward a hundred leagues from the Azores, a wonderful change took place in the sea and sky, both becoming serene and bland, and the air temperate and refreshing. He imagined that a peculiar mildness and suavity prevailed over a great tract of ocean extending from north to south, into which the navigator, sailing from east to west, would suddenly enter, as if crossing a line. The event seemed to justify his theory, for after making their way slowly for some time to the westward, through an ordeal of heats and calms, with a murky, stifling atmosphere, the ships all at once emerged into a genial region, a pleasant cooling breeze played over the surface of the sea, and gently filled their sails, the close and drizzling clouds broke away, the sky became serene and clear, and the sun shone forth with all its splendor, but no longer with a burning heat.

Columbus had intended, on reaching this temperate tract, to have stood once more to the south and then westward; but the late parching weather had opened the seams of his ships, and caused them to leak excessively, so that it was necessary to seek a harbor as soon as possible, where they might be refitted. Much of the provisions also was spoiled, and the water nearly exhausted. He kept on therefore directly to the west, trusting, from the flights of birds and other favorable indications, he should soon arrive at

land. Day after day passed away without his expectations being realized. The distresses of his men became continually more urgent; wherefore, supposing himself in the longitude of the Caribbee Islands, he bore away towards the northward in search of them.*

On the 31st of July, there was not above one cask of water remaining in each ship, when, about mid-day, a mariner at the mast-head beheld the summits of three mountains rising above the horizon, and gave the joyful cry of land. As the ships drew nearer, it was seen that these mountains were united at the base. Columbus had determined to give the first land he should behold the name of the Trinity. The appearance of these three mountains united into one struck him as a singular coincidence; and, with a solemn feeling of devotion, he gave the island the name of La Trinidad, which it bears at the present day.†

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 67. † Ibid., ubi sup.

CHAPTER II.

VOYAGE THROUGH THE GULF OF PARIA.

[1498.]

SHAPING his course for the island, Columbus approached its eastern extremity, to which he gave the name of Punta de la Galera, from a rock in the sea, which resembled a galley under sail. He was obliged to coast for five leagues along the southern shore, before he could find safe anchorage. On the following day, (August 1,) he continued coasting westward, in search of water and a convenient harbor where the vessels might be careened. He was surprised at the verdure and fertility of the country, having expected to find it more parched and sterile as he approached the equator; whereas he beheld groves of palm-trees, and luxuriant forests, sweeping down to the sea-side, with fountains and running streams. The shores were low and uninhabited, but the country rose in the interior, was cultivated in many places, and enlivened by hamlets and scattered habitations. In a word, the softness and purity of the climate, and the verdure, freshness, and sweetness of the country, appeared to him to equal the delights of early spring in the beautiful province of Valencia.*

Anchoring at a point to which he gave the name of Punta de la Playa, he sent the boats on shore for water. They found an

* Letter of Columbus to the Sovereigns from Hispaniola, Navarrete Coleo tom. i.

abundant and limpid brook, at which they filled their casks, but there was no safe harbor for the vessels, nor could they meet with any of the islanders, though they found prints of footsteps, and various fishing implements, left behind in the hurry of flight. There were tracks also of animals, which they supposed to be goats, but which must have been deer, with which, as it was afterwards ascertained, the island abounded.

While coasting the island, Columbus beheld land to the south, stretching to the distance of more than twenty leagues. It was that low tract of coast intersected by the numerous branches of the Oronoco, but the admiral, supposing it to be an island, gave it the name of La Isla Santa; little imagining that he now, for the first time, beheld that continent, that Terra Firma, which had been the object of his earnest search.

On the 2d of August he continued on to the southwest point of Trinidad, which he called Point Arenal. It stretched towards a corresponding point of Terra Firma, making a narrow pass, with a high rock in the centre, to which he gave the name of El Gallo. Near this pass the ships cast anchor. As they were approaching this place, a large canoe, with five-and-twenty Indians, put off from the shore, but paused on coming within bow-shot, and hailed the ships in a language which no one on board understood. Columbus tried to allure the savages on board, by friendly signs, by the display of looking-glasses, basins of polished metal, and various glittering trinkets, but all in vain. They remained gazing in mute wonder for above two hours, with their paddles in their hands, ready to take to flight on the least attempt to approach them. They were all young men, well formed, and naked, excepting bands and fillets of cotton about their heads, and colored cloths of the same about their loins. They were armed with

bows and arrows, the latter feathered and tipped with bone, and they had bucklers, an article of armor seen for the first time among the inhabitants of the New World.

Finding all other means to attract them ineffectual, Columbus now tried the power of music. He knew the fondness of the Indians for dances performed to the sound of their rude drums and the chant of their traditional ballads. He ordered something similar to be executed on the deck of his ship, where, while one man sang to the beat of the tabor, and the sound of other musical instruments, the ship-boys danced, after the popular Spanish fashion. No sooner, however, did this symphony strike up, than the Indians, mistaking it for a signal of hostilities, put their bucklers on their arms, seized their bows, and let fly a shower of arrows. This rude salutation was immediately answered by the discharge of a couple of cross-bows, which put the auditors to flight, and concluded this singular entertainment.

Though thus shy of the admiral's vessel, they approached one of the caravels without hesitation, and, running under the stern, had a parley with the pilot, who gave a cap and a mantle to the one who appeared to be the chieftain. He received the presents with great delight, inviting the pilot by signs to come to land, where he should be well entertained, and receive great presents in return. On his appearing to consent, they went to shore to wait for him. The pilot put off in the boat of the caravel to ask permission of the admiral; but the Indians, seeing him go on board of the hostile ship, suspected some treachery, and springing into their canoe, darted away, nor was any thing more seen of them.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88. P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. vi. Las Casas, Hist Ind., lib. i. cap. 138. MS. Letter of Columbus to the Castilian Sovereigns, Navarrete Colec., tom. i.

The complexion and other physical characteristics of these savages caused much surprise and speculation in the mind of Columbus. Supposing himself in the seventh degree of latitude, though actually in the tenth, he expected to find the inhabitants similar to the natives of Africa under the same parallel, who were black and ill-shaped, with crisped hair, or rather wool; whereas hese were well formed, had long hair, and were even fairer than those more distant from the equator. The climate, also, instead of being hotter as he approached the equinoctial, appeared more temperate. He was now in the dog-days, yet the nights and mornings were so cool that it was necessary to use covering as in winter. This is the case in many parts of the torrid zone, especially in calm weather, when there is no wind, for nature, by heavy dews, in the long nights of those latitudes, cools and refreshes the earth after the great heats of the day. Columbus was at first greatly perplexed by these contradictions to the course of nature, as observed in the Old World; they were in opposition also to the expectations he had founded on the theory of Ferrer the lapidary, but they gradually contributed to the formation of a theory which was springing up in his active imagination, and which will be presently shown.

After anchoring at Point Arenal, the crews were permitted to land and refresh themselves. There were no runs of water but by sinking pits in the sand they soon obtained sufficient to fill the casks. The anchorage at this place, however, was extremely insecure. A rapid current set from the eastward through the strait formed by the main-land and the island of Trinidad, flowing, as Columbus observed, night and day, with as much fury as the Guadalquiver, when swollen by floods. In the pass between Point Arenal and its correspondent point, the confined current

boiled and raged to such a degree, that he thought it was crossed by a reef of rocks and shoals, preventing all entrance, with others extending beyond, over which the waters roared like breakers on a rocky shore. To this pass, from its angry and dangerous appearance, he gave the name of Boca del Sierpe (the Mouth of the Serpent). He thus found himself placed between two difficulties. The continual current from the east seemed to prevent all return, while the rocks which appeared to beset the pass threatened destruction if he should proceed. Being on board of his ship, late at night, kept awake by painful illness and an anxious and watchful spirit, he heard a terrible roaring from the south, and beheld the sea heaped up, as it were, into a great ridge or hill, the height of the ship, covered with foam, and rolling towards him with a tremendous uproar. As this furious surge approached, rendered more terrible in appearance by the obscurity of night, he trembled for the safety of his vessels. His own ship was suddenly lifted up to such a height that he dreaded lest it should be overturned or cast upon the rocks, while another of the ships was torn violently from her anchorage. The crews were for a time in great consternation, fearing they should be swallowed up; but the mountainous surge passed on, and gradually subsided, after a violent contest with the counter-current of the strait.* This sudden rush of water, it is supposed, was caused by the swelling of one of the rivers which flow into the Gulf of Paria, and which were as yet unknown to Columbus.

Anxious to extricate himself from this dangerous neighborhood, he sent the boats on the following morning to sound the depth of water at the Boca del Sierpe, and to ascertain whether

* Letter of Columbus to the Castilian Sovereigns, Navarrete Colec., tom. i. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 10. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 69.

it was possible for ships to pass through to the northward. To his great joy, they returned with a report that there were several fathoms of water, and currents and eddies setting both ways, either to enter or return. A favorable breeze prevailing, he immediately made sail, and passing through the formidable strait in safety, found himself in a tranquil expanse beyond.

He was now on the inner side of Trinidad. To his left spread the broad gulf since known by the name of Paria, which he supposed to be the open sea, but was surprised, on tasting it, to find the water fresh. He continued northward, towards a mountain at the northwest point of the island, about fourteen leagues from Point Arenal. Here he beheld two lofty capes opposite each other, one on the island of Trinidad, the other to the west, on the long promontory of Paria, which stretches from the mainland and forms the northern side of the gulf, but which Columbus mistook for an island, and named Isla de Gracia.

Between these capes there was another pass, which appeared even more dangerous than the Boca del Sierpe, being beset with rocks, among which the current forced its way with roaring turbulence. To this pass Columbus gave the name of Boca del Dragon. Not choosing to encounter its apparent dangers, he turned northward, on Sunday, the 5th of August, and steered along the inner side of the supposed island of Gracia, intending to keep on until he came to the end of it, and then to strike northward into the free and open ocean, and shape his course for Hispaniola.

It was a fair and beautiful coast, indented with fine harbors lying close to each other; the country cultivated in many places, in others covered with fruit trees and stately forests, and watered by frequent streams. What greatly astonished Columbus, was still to find the water fresh, and that it grew more and more so

the farther he proceeded; it being that season of the year when the various rivers which empty themselves into this gulf are swollen by rains, and pour forth such quantities of fresh water as to conquer the saltness of the ocean. He was also surprised at the placidity of the sea, which appeared as tranquil and safe as one vast harbor, so that there was no need of seeking a port to anchor in.

As yet he had not been able to hold any communication with the people of this part of the New World. The shores which he had visited, though occasionally cultivated, were silent and deserted, and, excepting the fugitive party in the canoe at Point Arenal, he had seen nothing of the natives. After sailing several leagues along the coast, he anchored on Monday, the 6th of August, at a place where there appeared signs of cultivation, and sent the boats on shore. They found recent traces of people, but not an individual was to be seen. The coast was hilly, covered with beautiful and fruitful groves, and abounding with monkeys. Continuing further westward, to where the country was more level, Columbus anchored in a river.

Immediately a canoe, with three or four Indians, came off to the caravel nearest to the shore, the captain of which, pretending a desire to accompany them to land, sprang into their canoe, overturned it, and, with the assistance of his seamen, secured the Indians as they were swimming. When brought to the admiral, he gave them beads, hawks'-bells, and sugar, and sent them highly gratified on shore, where many of their countrymen were assembled. This kind treatment had the usual effect. Such of the natives as had canoes, came off to the ships with the fullest confidence. They were tall of stature, finely formed, and free and graceful in their movements. Their hair was long and

straight; some wore it cut short, but none of them braided it, as was the custom among the natives of Hispaniola. They were armed with bows, arrows, and targets; the men wore cotton cloths about their heads and loins, beautifully wrought with various colors, so as at a distance to look like silk; but the women were entirely naked. They brought bread, maize, and other eatables, with different kinds of beverage, some white, made from maize, and resembling beer, and others green, of a vinous flavor, and expressed from various fruits. They appeared to judge of every thing by the sense of smell, as others examine objects by the sight or touch. When they approached a boat, they smelt to it, and then to the people. In like manner every thing that was given them was tried. They set but little value upon beads, but were extravagantly delighted with hawks'-bells. Brass was also held in high estimation; they appeared to find something extremely grateful in the smell of it, and called it Turey, signifying that it was from the skies.*

From these Indians Columbus understood that the name of their country was Paria, and that farther to the west he would find it more populous. Taking several of them to serve as guides and mediators, he proceeded eight leagues westward to a point which he called Aguja, or the Needle. Here he arrived at three o'clock in the morning. When the day dawned he was delighted with the beauty of the country. It was cultivated in many places, highly populous, and adorned with magnificent vegetation; habitations were interspered among groves laden with fruits and flowers; grape-vines entwined themselves among the trees, and birds of brilliant plumage fluttered from branch to branch. The air was temperate and bland, and sweetened by the fragrance of flow-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 11.

ers and blossoms; and numerous fountains and limpid streams kept up a universal verdure and freshness. Columbus was so much charmed with the beauty and amenity of this part of the coast, that he gave it the name of The Gardens.

The natives came off in great numbers, in canoes, of superior construction to those hitherto seen, being very large and light, with a cabin in the centre for the accommodation of the owner and his family. They invited Columbus, in the name of their king, to come to land. Many of them had collars and burnished plates about their necks, of that inferior kind of gold called by the Indians Guanin. They said that it came from a high land, which they pointed out, at no great distance, to the west, but intimated that it was dangerous to go there, either because the inhabitants were cannibals, or the place infested by venomous animals.* But what aroused the attention and awakened the cupidity of the Spaniards, was the sight of strings of pearls round the arms of some of the natives. These, they informed Columbus, were procured on the sea-coast, on the northern side of Paria, which he still supposed to be an island; and they showed the mother-of-pearl shells whence they had been taken. Anxious for further information, and to procure specimens of these pearls to send to Spain, he dispatched the boats to shore. A multitude of the natives came to the beach to receive them, headed by the chief cacique and his son. They treated the Spaniards with profound reverence, as beings descended from heaven, and conducted them to a spacious house, the residence of the cacique, where they were regaled with bread and various fruits of excellent flavor, and the different kinds of beverage already mentioned. While

* Letter of Columbus to the Castilian Sovereigns, Navarrete Colec., tom. i p. 252.

they were in the house, the men remained together at one end of it, and the women at the other. After they had finished their collation at the house of the cacique, they were taken to that of his son, where a like repast was set before them. These people were remarkably affable, though, at the same time, they possessed a more intrepid and martial air and spirit than the natives of Cuba and Hispaniola. They were fairer, Columbus observes, than any he had yet seen, though so near to the equinoctial line, where he had expected to find them of the color of Ethiopians. Many ornaments of gold were seen among them, but all of an inferior quality: one Indian had a piece of the size of an apple. They had various kinds of domesticated parrots, one of a light-green color, with a yellow neck, and the tips of the wings of a bright red; others of the size of domestic fowls, and of a vivid scarlet, excepting some azure feathers in the wings. These they readily gave to the Spaniards; but what the latter most coveted were the pearls, of which they saw many necklaces and bracelets among the Indian women. The latter gladly gave them in exchange for hawks'-bells or any article of brass, and several specimens of fine pearls were procured for the admiral to send to the sovereigns.*

The kindness and amity of this people were heightened by an intelligent demeanor and a martial frankness. They seemed worthy of the beautiful country they inhabited. It was a cause of great concern both to them and the Spaniards, that they could not understand each other's language. They conversed, however, by signs; mutual good-will made their intercourse easy and pleasant; and at the hour of vespers the Spaniards returned on board of their ships, highly gratified with their entertainment.

* Letter of Columbus. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i lib. i. cap. 11. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 70.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE THROUGH THE GULF OF PARIA.—RETURN TO HISPANIOLA.

[1498.]

The quantity of fine pearls found among the natives of Paria was sufficient to arouse the sanguine anticipations of Columbus. It appeared to corroborate the theory of Ferrer, the learned jeweler, that, as he approached the equator, he would find the most rare and precious productions of nature. His active imagination, with its intuitive rapidity, seized upon every circumstance in unison with his wishes, and, combining them, drew thence the most brilliant inferences. He had read in Pliny that pearls are generated from drops of dew which fall into the mouths of oysters. if so, what place could be more propitious to their growth and multiplication than the coast of Paria? The dew in those parts was heavy and abundant, and the oysters were so plentiful that they clustered about the roots and pendant branches of the mangrove trees, which grew within the margin of the tranquil sea. When a branch which had drooped for a time in the water was drawn forth, it was found covered with oysters. Las Casas, noticing this sanguine conclusion of Columbus, observes, that the shell-fish here spoken of are not of the kind which produce pearl,

for that those by a natural instinct, as if conscious of their precious charge, hide themselves in the deepest water.*

Still imagining the coast of Paria to be an island, and anxious to circumnavigate it, and arrive at the place where these pearls were said by the Indians to abound, Columbus left the Gardens on the 10th of August, and continued coasting westward within the gulf, in search of an outlet to the north. He observed portions of Terra Firma appearing towards the bottom of the gulf, which he supposed to be islands, and called them Isabeta and Tramontana, and fancied that the desired outlet to the sea must lie between them. As he advanced, however, he found the water continually growing shallower and fresher, until he did not dare to venture any farther with his ship, which, he observed, was of too great a size for expeditions of this kind, being of an hundred tons burden, and requiring three fathoms of water. He came to anchor, therefore, and sent a light caravel called the Correo, to ascertain whether there was an outlet to the ocean between the supposed islands. The caravel returned on the following day, reporting that at the western end of the gulf there was an opening of two leagues, which led into an inner and circular gulf, surrounded by four openings, apparently smaller gulfs, or rather mouths of rivers, from which flowed the great quantity of fresh water that sweetened the neighboring sea. In fact, from one of these mouths issued the great river the Cuparipari, or, as it is now called, the Paria. To this inner and circular gulf Columbus gave the name of the Gulf of Pearls, through a mistaken idea that they abounded in its waters, though none, in fact, are found there. He still imagined that the four openings of which the mariners spoke, might be intervals between islands, though

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., cap. 136.

they affirmed that all the land he saw was connected.* As it was impossible to proceed further westward with his ships, he had no alternative but to retrace his course, and seek an exit to the north by the Boca del Dragon. He would gladly have continued for some time to explore this coast, for he considered himself in one of those opulent regions described as the most favored upon earth, and which increase in riches towards the equator. Imperious considerations, however, compelled him to shorten his voyage, and hasten to San Domingo. The sea-stores of his ships were almost exhausted, and the various supplies for the colony, with which they were freighted, were in danger of spoiling. He was suffering, also, extremely in his health. Besides the gout, which had rendered him a cripple for the greater part of the voyage, he was afflicted by a complaint in his eyes, caused by fatigue and over-watching, which almost deprived him of sight. Even the voyage along the coast of Cuba, he observes, in which he was three and thirty days almost without sleep, had not so injured his eyes and disordered his frame, or caused him so much painful suffering, as the present.†

On the 11th of August, therefore, he set sail eastward for the Boca del Dragon, and was borne along with great velocity by the currents, which, however, prevented him from landing again at his favorite spot, the Gardens. On Sunday the 13th, he anchored near to the Boca, in a fine harbor, to which he gave the name of Puerto de Gatos, from a species of monkey called gato paulo, with which the neighborhood abounded. On the margin of the sea he perceived many trees which, as he thought, produced the mirabolane, a fruit only found in the countries of the East.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 78.

† Letter of Columbus to the Sovereigns, Navarrete, tom. i. p. 252.

There were great numbers also of mangroves growing within the water, with oysters clinging to their branches, their mouths open, as he supposed, to receive the dew, which was afterwards to be transformed to pearls.*

On the following morning, the 14th of August, towards noon the ships approached the Boca del Dragon, and prepared to venture through that formidable pass. The distance from Cape Boto at the end of Paria, and Cape Lapa the extremity of Trinidad, is about five leagues; but in the interval there were two islands, which Columbus named Caracol and Delphin. The impetuous body of fresh water which flows through the gulf, particularly in the rainy months of July and August, is confined at the narrow outlets between these islands, where it causes a turbulent sea, foaming and roaring as if breaking over rocks, and rendering the entrance and exit of the gulf extremely dangerous. The horrors and perils of such places are always tenfold to discoverers, who have no chart, nor pilot, nor advice of previous voyager, to guide them. Columbus, at first, apprehended sunken rocks and shoals; but on attentively considering the commotion of the strait, he attributed it to the conflict between the prodigious body of fresh water setting through the gulf and struggling for an outlet, and the tide of salt water struggling to enter. The ships had scarcely ventured into the fearful channel when the wind died away, and they were in danger every moment of being thrown upon the rocks or sands. The current of fresh water, however, gained the victory, and carried them safely through. The admiral, when once more safe in the open sea, congratulated himself upon his escape from this perilous strait, which, he observes, might well be called the Mouth of the Dragon.†

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 10. † Ibid., cap. 11.

He now stood to the westward, running along the outer coast of Paria, still supposing it an island, and intending to visit the Gulf of Pearls, which he imagined to be at the end of it, opening to the sea. He wished to ascertain whether this great body of fresh water proceeded from rivers, as the crew of the caravel Correo had affirmed; for it appeared to him impossible that the streams of mere islands, as he supposed the surrounding lands, could furnish such a prodigious volume of water.

On leaving the Boca del Dragon, he saw to the northeast, many leagues distant, two islands, which he called Assumption and Conception; probably those now known as Tobago and Granada. In his course along the northern coast of Paria he saw several other small islands, and many fine harbors, to some of which he gave names, but they have ceased to be known by them. On the 15th he discovered the islands of Margarita and Cubagua, afterwards famous for their pearl fishery. The island of Margarita, about fifteen leagues in length, and six in breadth, was well peopled. The little island of Cubagua, lying between it and the main-land, and only about four leagues from the latter, was dry and sterile, without either wood or fresh water, but possessing a good harbor. On approaching this island, the admiral beheld a number of Indians fishing for pearls, who made for the land. A boat being sent to communicate with them, one of the sailors noticed many strings of pearls round the neck of a female. Having a plate of Valencia ware, a kind of porcelain painted and varnished with gaudy colors, he broke it, and presented the pieces to the Indian woman, who gave him in exchange a considerable number of her pearls. These he carried to the admiral, who immediately sent persons on shore, well provided with Valencian plates and hawks'-bells, for which in a little time he procured

about three pounds' weight of pearls, some of which were of a very large size, and were sent by him afterwards to the sovereigns as specimens.*

There was great temptation to visit other spots, which the Indians mentioned as abounding in pearls. The coast of Paria also continued extending to the westward as far as the eye could reach, rising into a range of mountains, and provoking examination to ascertain whether, as he began to think, it was a part of the Asiatic continent. Columbus was compelled, however, though with the greatest reluctance, to forego this most interesting investigation.

The malady of his eyes had now grown so virulent, that he could no longer take observations or keep a look-out, but had to trust to the reports of the pilots and mariners. He bore away, therefore, for Hispaniola, intending to repose there from the toils of his voyage, and to recruit his health, while he should send his brother, the Adelantado, to complete the discovery of this important country. After sailing for five days to the northwest, he made the island of Hispaniola on the 19th of August, fifty leagues to the westward of the river Ozema, the place of his destination; and anchored on the following morning under the little island of Beata.

He was astonished to find himself so mistaken in his calculations, and so far below his destined port; but he attributed it correctly to the force of the current setting out of the Boca del Dragon, which, while he had lain to at nights, to avoid running on rocks and shoals, had borne his ship insensibly to the west. This current, which sets across the Caribbean sea, and the continuation of which now bears the name of the Gulf Stream, was

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib. iii p. 169

so rapid, that on the 15th, though the wind was but moderate, the ships had made seventy-five leagues in four-and-twenty hours. Columbus attributed to the violence of this current the formation of that pass called the Boca del Dragon, where he supposed it had forced its way through a narrow isthmus that formerly connected Trinidad with the extremity of Paria. He imagined, also, that its constant operation had worn away and inundated the borders of the main-land, gradually producing that fringe of islands which stretches from Trinidad to the Lucayos or Bahamas, and which, according to his idea, had originally been part of the solid continent. In corroboration of this opinion, he notices the form of those islands: narrow from north to south, and extending in length from east to west, in the direction of the current.*

The island of Beata, where he had anchored, is about thirty leagues to the west of the river Ozema, where he expected to find the new sea-port which his brother had been instructed to establish. The strong and steady current from the east, however, and the prevalence of winds from that quarter, might detain him for a long time at the island, and render the remainder of his voyage slow and precarious. He sent a boat on shore, therefore, to procure an Indian messenger to take a letter to his brother, the Adelantado. Six of the natives came off to the ships, one of whom was armed with a Spanish cross-bow. The admiral was alarmed at seeing a weapon of the kind in the possession of an Indian. It was not an article of traffic, and he feared could only have fallen into his hands by the death of some Spaniard.† He ap-

* Letter to the King and Queen, Navarrete Colec., tom. i.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 148.

prehended that further evils had befallen the settlement during his long absence, and that there had again been troubles with the natives.

Having dispatched his messenger, he made sail, and arrived off the mouth of the river on the 30th of August. He was met on the way by a caravel, on board of which was the Adelantado, who, having received his letter, had hastened forth with affectionate ardor to welcome his arrival. The meeting of the brothers was a cause of mutual joy; they were strongly attached to each other, each had had his trials and sufferings during their long separation, and each looked with confidence to the other for comfort and relief. Don Bartholomew appears to have always had great deference for the brilliant genius, the enlarged mind, and the commanding reputation of his brother; while the latter placed great reliance, in times of difficulty, on the worldly knowledge, the indefatigable activity, and the lion-hearted courage of the Adelantado.

Columbus arrived almost the wreck of himself. His voyages were always of a nature to wear out the human frame, having to navigate amidst unknown dangers, and to keep anxious watch, at all hours, and in all weathers. As age and infirmity increased upon him, these trials became the more severe. His constitution must originally have been wonderfully vigorous; but constitutions of this powerful kind, if exposed to severe hardships at an advanced period of life, when the frame has become somewhat rigid and unaccommodating, are apt to be suddenly broken up, and to be a prey to violent aches and maladies. In this last voyage Columbus had been parched and consumed by fever, racked by gout, and his whole system disordered by incessant watchfulness; he

came into port haggard, emaciated, and almost blind. His spirit, however, was, as usual, superior to all bodily affliction or decay, and he looked forward with magnificent anticipations to the result of his recent discoveries, which he intended should be immediately prosecuted by his hardy and enterprising brother.

CHAPTER IV.

SPECULATIONS OF COLUMBUS CONCERNING THE COAST OF PARIA.

[1498.]

THE natural phenomena of a great and striking nature presented to the ardent mind of Columbus in the course of this voyage, led to certain sound deductions and imaginative speculations. The immense body of fresh water flowing into the Gulf of Paria, and thence rushing into the ocean, was too vast to be produced by an island or by islands. It must be the congregated streams of a great extent of country pouring forth in one mighty river, and the land necessary to furnish such a river must be a continent. He now supposed that most of the tracts of land which he had seen about the Gulf were connected: that the coast of Paria extended westward far beyond a chain of mountains which he had beheld afar off from Margarita; and that the land opposite to Trinidad, instead of being an island, continued to the south, far beyond the equator, into that hemisphere hitherto unknown to civilized man. He considered all this an extension of the Asiatic continent; thus presuming that the greater part of the surface of the globe was firm land. In this last opinion he found himself supported by authors of the highest name, both ancient and mo-

dern; among whom he cites Aristotle and Seneca, St. Augustine and Cardinal Pedro de Alliaco. He lays particular stress also on the assertion of the apocryphal Esdras, that of seven parts of the world, six are dry land, and one part only is covered with water.

The land, therefore, surrounding the Gulf of Paria, was but the border of an almost boundless continent, stretching far to the west and to the south, including the most precious regions of the earth, lying under the most auspicious stars and benignant skies, but as yet unknown and uncivilized, free to be discovered and appropriated by any Christian nation. "May it please our Lord," he exclaims in his letter to the sovereigns, "to give long life and health to your highnesses, that you may prosecute this noble enterprise, in which, methinks, God will receive great service, Spain vast increase of grandeur, and all Christians much consolation and delight, since the name of our Saviour will be divulged throughout these lands."

Thus far the deductions of Columbus, though sanguine, admit of little cavil; but he carried them still farther, until they ended in what may appear to some mere chimerical reveries. In his letter to the sovereigns, he stated that, on his former voyages, when he steered westward from the Azores, he had observed, after sailing about a hundred leagues, a sudden and great change in the sky and the stars, the temperature of the air, and the calmness of the ocean. It seemed as if a line ran from north to south, beyond which every thing became different. The needle which had previously inclined toward the northeast, now varied a whole point to the northwest. The sea, hitherto clear, was covered with weeds, so dense, that in his first voyage he had expected to run aground upon shoals. A universal tranquillity reigned through-

out the elements, and the climate was mild and genial whether in summer or winter. On taking his astronomical observations at night, after crossing that imaginary line, the north star appeared to him to describe a diurnal circle in the heavens, of five degrees in diameter.

On his present voyage he had varied his route, and had run southward from the Cape de Verde Islands for the equinoctial line. Before reaching it, however, the heat had become insupportable, and, a wind springing up from the east, he had been induced to strike westward, when in the parallel of Sierra Leone in Guinea. For several days he had been almost consumed by scorching and stifling heat under a sultry yet clouded sky, and in a drizzling atmosphere, until he arrived at the ideal line already mentioned, extending from north to south. Here suddenly, to his great relief, he had emerged into serene weather, with a clear blue sky and a sweet and temperate atmosphere. The farther he had proceeded west, the more pure and genial he had found the climate; the sea tranquil, the breezes soft and balmy. All these phenomena coincided with those he had remarked at the same line, though farther north, in his former voyages; excepting that here there was no herbage in the sea, and the movements of stars were different. The polar star appeared to him here to describe a diurnal circle of ten degrees instead of five; an augmentation which struck him with astonishment, but which he says he ascertained by observations taken in different nights, with his quadrant. Its greatest altitude at the former place, in the parallel of the Azores, he had found to be ten degrees, and in the present place fifteen.

From these and other circumstances, he was inclined to doubt the received theory with respect to the form of the earth. Phi-

losophers had described it as spherical; but they knew nothing of the part of the world which he had discovered. The ancient part, known to them, he had no doubt was spherical, but he now supposed the real form of the earth to be that of a pear, one part much more elevated than the rest, and tapering upward toward the skies. This part he supposed to be in the interior of this newly found continent, and immediately under the equator. All the phenomena which he had previously noticed, appeared to corroborate this theory. The variations which he had observed in passing the imaginary line running from north to south, he concluded to be caused by the ships having arrived at this supposed swelling of the earth, where they began gently to mount towards the skies into a purer and more celestial atmosphere.* The variation of the needle he ascribed to the same cause, being affected by the coolness and mildness of the climate; varying to the northwest in proportion as the ships continued onward in their ascent.† So also the altitude of the north star, and the circle it described in the heavens, appeared to be greater, in consequence of being regarded from a greater elevation, less obliquely, and through a purer medium of atmosphere; and these phenomena

* Peter Martyr mentions that the admiral told him, that, from the climate of great heat and unwholesome air, he had ascended the back of the sea, as it were ascending a high mountain towards heaven. Decad. i. lib. vi.

† Columbus, in his attempts to account for the variation of the needle, supposed that the north star possessed the quality of the four cardinal points, as did likewise the loadstone. That if the needle were touched with one part of the loadstone, it would point east, with another west, and so on. Wherefore, he adds, those who prepare or magnetize the needles, cover the loadstone with a cloth, so that the north part only remains out; that is to say, the part which possesses the virtue of causing the needle to point to the north. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 66.

would be found to increase the more the navigator approached the equator, from the still increasing eminence of this part of the earth.

He noticed, also, the difference of climate, vegetation, and people, of this part of the New World, from those under the same parallel in Africa. There the heat was insupportable, the land parched and sterile, the inhabitants were black, with crisped wool, ill-shapen in their forms, and dull and brutal in their natures. Here, on the contrary, although the sun was in Leo, he found the noontide heat moderate, the mornings and evenings fresh and cool, the country green and fruitful, and covered with beautiful forests, the people fairer even than those in the lands he had discovered farther north, having long hair, with well-proportioned and graceful forms, lively minds, and courageous dispositions. All this, in a latitude so near to the equator, he attributed to the superior altitude of this part of the world, by which it was raised into a more celestial region of the air. On turning northward, through the Gulf of Paria, he had found the circle described by the north star again to diminish. The current of the sea also increased in velocity, wearing away, as has already been remarked, the borders of the continent, and producing by its incessant operation the adjacent islands. This was a further confirmation of the idea that he ascended in going southward, and descended in returning northward.

Aristotle had imagined that the highest part of the earth, and nearest to the skies, was under the antarctic pole. Other sages had maintained that it was under the arctic. Hence it was apparent that both conceived one part of the earth to be more elevated, and noble, and nearer to the heavens than the rest. They did not think of this eminence being under the equinoctial line,

observed Columbus, because they had no certain knowledge of this hemisphere, but only spoke of it theoretically and from conjecture.

As usual, he assisted his theory by Holy Writ. "The sun, when God created it," he observes, "was in the first point of the Orient, or the first light was there." That place, according to his idea, must be here, in the remotest part of the East, where the ocean and the extreme part of India meet under the equinoctial line, and where the highest point of the earth is situated.

He supposed this apex of the world, though of immense height, to be neither rugged nor precipitous, but that the land rose to it by gentle and imperceptible degrees. The beautiful and fertile shores of Paria were situated on its remote borders, abounding of course with those precious articles which are congenial with the most favored and excellent climates. As one penetrated the interior and gradually ascended, the land would be found to increase in beauty and luxuriance, and in the exquisite nature of its productions, until one arrived at the summit under the equator. This he imagined to be the noblest and most perfect place on earth, enjoying, from its position, an equality of nights and days, and a uniformity of seasons; and being elevated into a serene and heavenly temperature, above the heats and colds, the clouds and vapors, the storms and tempests which deform and disturb the lower regions. In a word, here he supposed to be situated the original abode of our first parents, the primitive seat of human innocence and bliss, the Garden of Eden, or terrestrial paradise!

He imagined this place, according to the opinion of the most eminent fathers of the church, to be still flourishing, possessed of all its blissful delights, but inaccessible to mortal feet, excepting

by divine permission. From this height he presumed, though of course from a great distance, proceeded the mighty stream of fresh water which filled the Gulf of Paria, and sweetened the salt ocean in its vicinity, being supplied by the fountain mentioned in Genesis, as springing from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Such was the singular speculation of Columbus, which he details at full length in a letter to the Castilian sovereigns,* citing various authorities for his opinions, among which were St. Augustine, St. Isidor, and St. Ambrosius, and fortifying his theory with much of that curious and speculative erudition in which he was deeply versed.† It shows how his ardent mind was heated by the magnificence of his discoveries. Shrewd men, in the coolness and quietude of ordinary life, and in these modern days of cautious and sober fact, may smile at such a revery, but it was countenanced by the speculations of the most sage and learned of those times; and if this had not been the case, could we wonder at any sally of the imagination in a man placed in the situation of Columbus? He beheld a vast world, rising, as it were, into existence before him, its nature and extent unknown and undefined, as yet a mere region for conjecture. Every day displayed

* Navarrete, Colec. de Viages, tom. i. p. 242.

† See Illustrations, article "Situation of the Terrestrial Paradise."

Note.—A great part of these speculations appear to have been founded on the treatise of the Cardinal Pedro de Aliaco, in which Columbus found a compendium of the opinions of various eminent authors on the subject; though it is very probable he consulted many of their works likewise. In the volume of Pedro de Aliaco, existing in the library of the Cathedral at Seville, I have traced the germs of these ideas in various passages of the text, opposite to which marginal notes have been made in the handwriting of Columbus.

some new feature of beauty and sublimity; island after island, where the rocks, he was told, were veined with gold, the groves teemed with spices, or the shores abounded with pearls. Interminable ranges of coast, promontory beyond promontory, stretching as far as the eye could reach; luxuriant valleys sweeping away into a vast interior, whose distant mountains, he was told, concealed still happier lands, and realms of greater opulence. When he looked upon all this region of golden promise, it was with the glorious conviction that his genius had called it into existence; he regarded it with the triumphant eye of a discoverer Had not Columbus been capable of these enthusiastic soarings of the imagination, he might, with other sages, have reasoned calmly and coldly in his closet about the probability of a continent existing in the west; but he would never have had the daring enterprise to adventure in search of it into the unknown realms of ocean.

Still, in the midst of his fanciful speculations, we find that sagacity which formed the basis of his character. The conclusion which he drew from the great flow of the Oronoco, that it must be the outpouring of a continent, was acute and striking. A learned Spanish historian has also ingeniously excused other parts of his theory. "He suspected," observes he, "a certain elevation of the globe at one part of the equator; philosophers have since determined the world to be a spheroid, slightly elevated in its equatorial circumference. He suspected that the diversity of temperatures influenced the needle, not being able to penetrate the cause of its inconstant variations; the successive series of voyages and experiments have made this inconstancy more manifest, and have shown that extreme cold sometimes divests the needle of all its virtue. Perhaps new observations may justify

the surmise of Columbus. Even his error concerning the circle described by the polar star, which he thought augmented by an optical illusion in proportion as the observer approached the equinox, manifests him a philosopher superior to the time in which he lived."*

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo lib. vi. § 22.

BOOK XI.

CHAPTER I.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE ADELANTADO.—EXPEDITION TO THE PROVINCE OF XARAGUA.

[1498.]

COLUMBUS had anticipated repose from his toils on arriving at Hispaniola, but a new scene of trouble and anxiety opened upon him, destined to impede the prosecution of his enterprises, and to affect all his future fortunes. To explain this, it is necessary to relate the occurrences of the island during his long detention in Spain.

When he sailed for Europe in March, 1496, his brother, Don Bartholomew, who remained as Adelantado, took the earliest measures to execute his directions with respect to the mines recently discovered by Miguel Diaz on the south side of the island. Leaving Don Diego Columbus in command at Isabella, he repaired with a large force to the neighborhood of the mines, and, choosing a favorable situation in a place most abounding in ore, built a fortress, to which he gave the name of San Christoval. The workmen, however, finding grains of gold among the earth and stone employed in its construction, gave it the name of the Golden Tower.*

* Peter Martyr, decad i. lib. iv.

The Adelantado remained here three months, superintending the building of the fortress, and making the necessary preparations for working the mines and purifying the ore. The progress of the work, however, was greatly impeded by scarcity of provisions, having frequently to detach a part of the men about the country in quest of supplies. The former hospitality of the island was at an end. The Indians no longer gave their provisions freely; they had learnt from the white men to profit by the necessities of the stranger, and to exact a price for bread. Their scanty stores, also, were soon exhausted, for their fruga. habits, and their natural indolence and improvidence, seldom permitted them to have more provisions on hand than was requisite for present support.* The Adelantado found it difficult, therefore, to maintain so large a force in the neighborhood, until they should have time to cultivate the earth, and raise live-stock, or should receive supplies from Spain. Leaving ten men to guard the fortress, with a dog to assist them in catching utias, he marched with the rest of his men, about four hundred in number, to Fort Conception, in the abundant country of the Vega. He passed the whole month of June collecting the quarterly tribute, being supplied with food by Guarionex and his subordinate caciques. In the following month (July, 1496,) the three caravels commanded by Niño arrived from Spain, bringing a reinforcement of men, and, what was still more needed, a supply of provisions. The latter was quickly distributed among the hungry colonists, but unfortunately a great part had been injured during the voyage. This was a serious misfortune in a community where the least scarcity produced murmur and sedition.

By these ships the Adelantado received letters from his

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v.

brother directing him to found a town and sea-port at the mouth of the Ozema, near to the new mines. He requested him, also, to send prisoners to Spain such of the caciques and their subjects as had been concerned in the death of any of the colonists; that being considered as sufficient ground, by many of the ablest jurists and theologians of Spain, for selling them as slaves. On the return of the caravels, the Adelantado dispatched three hundred Indian prisoners, and three caciques. These formed the ill-starred cargoes about which Niño had made such absurd vaunting, as though the ships were laden with treasure; and which had caused such mortification, disappointment, and delay to Columbus.

Having obtained by this arrival a supply of provisions, the Adelantado returned to the fortress of San Christoval, and thence proceeded to the Ozema, to choose a site for the proposed sea-port. After a careful examination, he chose the eastern bank of a natural haven at the mouth of the river. It was easy of access, of sufficient depth, and good anchorage. The river ran through a beautiful and fertile country; its waters were pure and salubrious, and well stocked with fish; its banks were covered with trees bearing the fine fruits of the island, so that in sailing along, the fruits and flowers might be plucked with the hand from the branches which overhung the stream.* This delightful vicinity was the dwelling-place of the female cacique who had conceived an affection for the young Spaniard Miguel Diaz, and had induced him to entice his countrymen to that part of the island. The promise she had given of a friendly reception on the part of her tribe was faithfully performed.

On a commanding bank of the harbor, Don Bartholomew

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v.

erected a fortress, which at first was called Isabella, but afterwards San Domingo, and was the origin of the city which still bears that name. The Adelantado was of an active and indefatigable spirit. No sooner was the fortress completed, than he left in it a garrison of twenty men, and with the rest of his forces set out to visit the dominions of Behechio, one of the principal chieftains of the island. This cacique, as has already been mentioned, reigned over Xaragua, a province comprising almost the whole coast at the west end of the island, including Cape Tiburon, and extending along the south side as far as Point Aguida, or the small island of Beata. It was one of the most populous and fertile districts, with a delightful climate; and its inhabitants were softer and more graceful in their manners than the rest of the islanders. Being so remote from all the fortresses, the cacique, although he had taken a part in the combination of the chieftains, had hitherto remained free from the incursions and exactions of the white men.

With this cacique resided Anacaona, widow of the late formidable Caonabo. She was sister to Behechio, and had taken refuge with her brother after the capture of her husband. She was one of the most beautiful females of the island; her name in the Indian language, signified "The Golden Flower." She possessed a genius superior to the generality of her race, and was said to excel in composing those little legendary ballads, or areytos, which the natives chanted as they performed their national dances. All the Spanish writers agree in describing her as possessing a natural dignity and grace hardly to be credited in her ignorant and savage condition. Notwithstanding the ruin with which her husband had been overwhelmed by the hostility of the white men, she appears to have entertained no vindictive feeling towards them, knowing

that he had provoked their vengeance by his own voluntary warfare. She regarded the Spaniards with admiration as almost superhuman beings, and her intelligent mind perceived the futility and impolicy of any attempt to resist their superiority in arts and arms. Having great influence over her brother Behechio, she counseled him to take warning by the fate of her husband, and to concili te the friendship of the Spaniards; and it is supposed that a knowledge of the friendly sentiments and powerful influence of this princess, in a great measure prompted the Adelantado to his present expedition.*

In passing through those parts of the island which had hitherto been unvisited by Europeans, the Adelantado adopted the same imposing measures which the admiral had used on a former occasion; he put his cavalry in the advance, and entered all the Indian towns in martial array, with standards displayed, and the sound of drum and trumpet.

After proceeding about thirty leagues, he came to the river Neyva, which, issuing from the mountains of Cibao, divides the southern side of the island. Crossing this stream, he dispatched two parties of ten men each along the sea-coast in search of brazil-wood. They found great quantities, and felled many trees, which they stored in the Indian cabins, until they could be taken away by sea.

Inclining with his main force to the right, the Adelantado met, not far from the river, the cacique Behechio, with a great army of his subjects, armed with bows and arrows, and lances. If he had come forth with the intention of opposing the inroad into his forest domains, he was probably daunted by the formida-

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib ii. p. 147. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo lib. vi. § 6.

ble appearance of the Spaniards. Laying aside his weapons, he advanced and accosted the Adelantado very amicably, professing that he was thus in arms for the purpose of subjecting certain villages along the river, and inquiring, at the same time, the object of this incursion of the Spaniards. The Adelantado assured him that he came on a peaceful visit to pass a little time in friendly intercourse at Xaragua. He succeeded so well in allaying the apprehensions of the cacique, that the latter dismissed his army, and sent swift messengers to order preparations for the suitable reception of so distinguished a guest. As the Spaniards advanced into the territories of the chieftain, and passed through the districts of his inferior caciques, the latter brought forth cassava bread, hemp, cotton, and various other productions of the land. At length they drew near to the residence of Behechio, which was a large town situated in a beautiful part of the country near the coast, at the bottom of that deep bay, called at present the Bight of Leogan.

The Spaniards had heard many accounts of the soft and delightful region of Xaragua, in one part of which Indian traditions placed their Elysian fields. They had heard much, also, of the beauty and urbanity of the inhabitants: the mode of their reception was calculated to confirm their favorable prepossessions. As they approached the place, thirty females of the cacique's household came forth to meet them, singing their areytos, or traditionary ballads, and dancing and waving palm branches. The married females wore aprons of embroidered cotton, reaching half way to the knee; the young women were entirely naked, with merely a fillet round the forehead, their hair falling upon their shoulders. They were beautifully proportioned; their skin smooth and delicate, and their complexion of a clear agreeable

brown. According to old Peter Martyr, the Spaniards when they beheld them issuing forth from their green woods, almost imagined they beheld the fabled dryads, or native nymphs and fairies of the fountains, sung by the ancient poets.* When they came before Don Bartholomew, they knelt and gracefully presented him the green branches. After these came the female cacique Anacaona, reclining on a kind of light litter borne by six Indians. Like the other females, she had no other covering than an apron of various-colored cotton. She wore round her head a fragrant garland of red and white flowers, and wreaths of the same round her neck and arms. She received the Adelantado and his followers with that natural grace and courtesy for which she was celebrated; manifesting no hostility towards them for the fate her husband had experienced at their hands.

The Adelantado and his officers were conducted to the house of Behechio, where a banquet was served up of utias, a great variety of sea and river fish, with roots and fruits of excellent quality. Here first the Spaniards conquered their repugnance to the guana, the favorite delicacy of the Indians, but which the former had regarded with disgust, as a species of serpent. The Adelantado, willing to accustom himself to the usages of the country, was the first to taste this animal, being kindly pressed thereto by Anacaona. His followers imitated his example; they found it to be highly palatable and delicate; and from that time forward, the guana was held in repute among Spanish epicures.†

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v.

† "These serpentes are lyke unto crocodiles, saving in bygness; they call them guanas. Unto that day none of owre men durste adventure to taste of them, by reason of theyre horrible deformitie and lothsomnes. Yet the Adelantado being entysed by the pleasantnes of the king's sister, Anacaona, deter-

The banquet being over, Don Bartholomew with six of his principal cavaliers were lodged in the dwelling of Behechio; the rest were distributed in the houses of the inferior caciques, where they slept in hammocks of matted cotton, the usual beds of the natives.

For two days they remained with the hospitable Behechio, entertained with various Indian games and festivities, among which the most remarkable was the representation of a battle. Two squadrons of naked Indians, armed with bows and arrows, sallied suddenly into the public square and began to skirmish in a manner similar to the Moorish play of canes, or tilting reeds. By degrees they became excited, and fought with such earnestness, that four were slain, and many wounded, which seemed to increase the interest and pleasure of the spectators. The contest would have continued longer, and might have been still more bloody, had not the Adelantado and the other cavaliers interfered and begged that the game might cease.*

When the festivities were over, and familiar intercourse had promoted mutual confidence, the Adelantado addressed the cacique and Anacaona on the real object of his visit. He informed him that his brother, the admiral, had been sent to this island by the sovereigns of Castile, who were great and mighty potentates, with many kingdoms under their sway. That the

mined to taste the serpentes. But when he felte the flesh thereof to be so delycate to his tongue, he fel to amayne without al feare. The which tnyng his companions perceiving, were not behynde hym in greedynesse: insomuche that they had now none other talke than of the sweetnesse of these serpentes, which they affirm to be of more pleasant taste, than eyther our phesantes or partriches." Peter Martyr, decad. i. book v. Eden's Eng. Trans.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., tom. i. cap. 113.

admiral had returned to apprise his sovereigns how many tributary caciques there were in the island, leaving him in command, and that he had come to receive Behechio under the protection of these mighty sovereigns, and to arrange a tribute to be paid by him, in such manner as should be most convenient and satisfactory to himself.*

The cacique was greatly embarrassed by this demand, knowing the sufferings inflicted on the other parts of the island by the avidity of the Spaniards for gold. He replied that he had been apprised that gold was the great object for which the white men had come to their island, and that a tribute was paid in it by some of his fellow-caciques; but that in no part of his territories was gold to be found; and his subjects hardly knew what it was. To this the Adelantado replied with great adroitness, that nothing was farther from the intention or wish of his sovereigns than to require a tribute in things not produced in his dominions, but that it might be paid in cotton, hemp, and cassava bread, with which the surrounding country appeared to abound. The countenance of the cacique brightened at this intimation; he promised cheerful compliance, and instantly sent orders to all his subordinate caciques to sow abundance of cotton for the first payment of the stipulated tribute. Having made all the requisite arrangements, the Adelantado took a most friendly leave of Behechio and his sister, and set out for Isabella.

Thus, by amicable and sagacious management, one of the most extensive provinces of the island was brought into cheerful subjection, and had not the wise policy of the Adelantado been defeated by the excesses of worthless and turbulent men, a large

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 114.

revenue might have been collected, without any recourse to violence or oppression. In all instances, these simple people appear to have been extremely tractable, and meekly and even cheerfully to have resigned their rights to the white men, when treated with gentleness and humanity.

CHAPTER II.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CHAIN OF MILITARY POSTS.—INSURRECTION OF GUARIONEX, THE CACIQUE OF THE VEGA.

[1496.]

ON arriving at Isabella, Don Bartholomew found it, as usual, a scene of misery and repining. Many had died during his absence; most were ill. Those who were healthy complained of the scarcity of food, and those who were ill, of the want of medicines. The provisions distributed among them, from the supply brought out a few months before by Pedro Alonzo Niño, had been consumed. Partly from sickness, and partly from a repugnance to labor, they had neglected to cultivate the surrounding country, and the Indians, on whom they chiefly depended, outraged by their oppressions, had abandoned the vicinity, and fled to the mountains; choosing rather to subsist on roots and herbs, in their rugged retreats, than remain in the luxuriant plains, subject to the wrongs and cruelties of the white men. The history of this island presents continual pictures of the miseries, the actual want and poverty produced by the grasping avidity of gold. It had rendered the Spaniards heedless of all the less obvious, but more certain and salubrious sources of wealth. All labor seemed lost that was to produce profit by a

circuitous process. Instead of cultivating the luxuriant soil around them, and deriving real treasures from its surface, they wasted their time in seeking for mines and golden streams, and were starving in the midst of fertility.

No sooner were the provisions exhausted which had been brought out by Niño, than the colonists began to break forth in their accustomed murmurs. They represented themselves as neglected by Columbus, who, amidst the blandishments and delights of a court, thought little of their sufferings. They considered themselves equally forgotten by government; while, having no vessel in the harbor, they were destitute of all means of sending home intelligence of their disastrous situation, and imploring relief.

To remove this last cause of discontent, and furnish some object for their hopes and thoughts to rally round, the Adelantado ordered that two caravels should be built at Isabella, for the use of the island. To relieve the settlement, also, from all useless and repining individuals, during this time of scarcity, he distributed such as were too ill to labor, or to bear arms, into the interior, where they would have the benefit of a better climate, and more abundant supply of Indian provisions. He at the same time completed and garrisoned the chain of military posts established by his brother in the preceding year, consisting of five fortified houses, each surrounded by its dependent hamlet. The first of these was about nine leagues from Isabella, and was called la Esperanza. Six leagues beyond was Santa Catalina. Four leagues and a half further was Magdalena, where the first town of Santiago was afterwards founded; and five leagues farther Fort Conception—which was fortified with great care, being in the vast and populous Vega, and within half a league from the

residence of its cacique, Guarionex.* Having thus relieved Isabella of all its useless population, and left none but such as were too ill to be removed, or were required for the service and protection of the place, and the construction of the caravels, the Adelantado returned, with a large body of the most effective men, to the fortress of San Domingo.

The military posts, thus established, succeeded for a time in overawing the natives; but fresh hostilities were soon manifested, excited by a different cause from the preceding. Among the missionaries who had accompanied Friar Boyle to the island, were two of far greater zeal than their superior. When he returned to Spain, they remained, earnestly bent upon the fulfillment of their mission. One was called Roman Pane, a poor hermit, as he styled himself, of the order of St. Geronimo; the other was Juan Borgoñon, a Franciscan. They resided for some time among the Indians of the Vega, strenuously endeavoring to make converts, and had succeeded with one family, of sixteen persons, the chief of which, on being baptized, took the name of Juan Mateo. The conversion of the cacique Guarionex, however, was their main object. The extent of his possessions made his conversion of great importance to the interests of the colony, and was considered by the zealous fathers a means of bringing his numerous subjects under the dominion of the church. For some time he lent a willing ear; he learnt the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Creed, and made his whole family repeat them daily. The other caciques of the Vega and of the provinces of Cibao, however, scoffed at him for meanly conforming to the laws

* P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. v. Of the residence of Guarionex, which must have been a considerable town, not the least vestige can be discovered at present

and customs of strangers, usurpers of his domains, and oppressors of his nation. The friars complained that, in consequence of these evil communications, their convert suddenly relapsed into infidelity; but another and more grievous cause is assigned for his recantation. His favorite wife was seduced or treated with outrage by a Spaniard of authority; and the cacique renounced all faith in a religion, which, as he supposed, admitted of such atrocities. Losing all hope of effecting his conversion, the missionaries removed to the territories of another cacique, taking with them Juan Mateo, their Indian convert. Before their departure, they erected a small chapel, and furnished it with an altar, crucifix, and images, for the use of the family of Mateo.

Scarcely had they departed, when several Indians entered the chapel, broke the images in pieces, trampled them under foot, and buried them in a neighboring field. This, it was said, was done by order of Guarionex, in contempt of the religion from which he had apostatized. A complaint of this enormity was carried to the Adelantado, who ordered a suit to be immediately instituted, and those who were found culpable, to be punished according to law. It was a period of great rigor in ecclesiastical law, especially among the Spaniards. In Spain, all heresies in religion, all recantations from the faith, and all acts of sacrilege, either by Moor or Jew, were punished with fire and fagot. Such was the fate of the poor ignorant Indians, convicted of this outrage on the church. It is questionable whether Guarionex had any hand in this offence, and it is probable that the whole affair was exaggerated. A proof of the credit due to the evidence brought forward, may be judged by one of the facts recorded by Roman Pane, "the poor hermit." The field in which the holy images

were buried, was planted, he says, with certain roots shaped like a turnip, or radish, several of which coming up in the neighborhood of the images, were found to have grown most miraculously in the form of a cross.*

The cruel punishment inflicted on these Indians, instead of daunting their countrymen, filled them with horror and indignation. Unaccustomed to such stern rule and vindictive justice, and having no clear ideas nor powerful sentiments with respect to religion of any kind, they could not comprehend the nature nor extent of the crime committed. Even Guarionex, a man naturally moderate and pacific, was highly incensed with the assumption of power within his territories, and the inhuman death inflicted on his subjects. The other caciques perceived his irritation, and endeavored to induce him to unite in a sudden insurrection, that by one vigorous and general effort, they might break the yoke of their oppressors. Guarionex wavered for some time. He knew the martial skill and prowess of the Spaniards; he stood in awe of their cavalry, and he had before him the disastrous fate of Caonabo; but he was rendered bold by despair, and he beheld in the domination of these strangers the assured ruin of his race. The early writers speak of a tradition current among the inhabitants of the island, respecting this Guarionex. He was of an ancient line of hereditary caciques. His father, in times long preceding the discovery, having fasted for five days, according to their superstitious observances, applied to his zemi, or household deity, for information of things to come. He received for answer, that within a few years there should come to the island a nation covered with clothing, which should destroy all their customs and ceremonies, and slay their children or reduce them to painful ser-

* Escritura de Fr. Roman, Hist. del Almirante.

vitude.* The tradition was probably invented by the Butios, or priests, after the Spaniards had begun to exercise their severities. Whether their prediction had an effect in disposing the mind of Guarionex to hostilities is uncertain. Some have asserted that he was compelled to take up arms by his subjects, who threatened, in case of his refusal, to choose some other chieftain; others have alleged the outrage committed upon his favorite wife, as the principal cause of his irritation.† It was probably these things combined, which at length induced him to enter into the conspiracy. A secret consultation was held among the caciques, wherein it was concerted, that on the day of payment of their quarterly tribute, when a great number could assemble without causing suspicion, they should suddenly rise upon the Spaniards and massacre them.‡

By some means the garrison at Fort Conception received intimation of this conspiracy. Being but a handful of men, and surrounded by hostile tribes, they wrote a letter to the Adelantado, at San Domingo, imploring immediate aid. As this letter might be taken from their Indian messenger, the natives having discovered that these letters had a wonderful power of communicating intelligence, and fancying they could talk, it was inclosed in a reed, to be used as a staff. The messenger was, in fact, intercepted; but, affecting to be dumb and lame, and intimating by signs that he was returning home, was permitted to limp forward on his journey. When out of sight he resumed his speed, and bore the letter safely and expeditiously to San Domingo.§

The Adelantado, with his characteristic promptness and ac-

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. ix. † Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 121.
‡ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 65. Peter Martyr, decad. vi. lib. v.
§ Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7.

tivity, set out immediately with a body of troops for the fortress; and though his men were much enfeebled by scanty fare, hard service, and long marches, hurried them rapidly forward. Never did aid arrive more opportunely. The Indians were assembled on the plain, to the amount of many thousands, armed after their manner, and waiting for the appointed time to strike the blow. After consulting with the commander of the fortress and his officers, the Adelantado concerted a mode of proceeding. Ascertaining the places in which the various caciques had distributed their forces, he appointed an officer with a body of men to each cacique, with orders, at an appointed hour of the night, to rush into the villages, surprise them asleep and unarmed, bind the caciques, and bring them off prisoners. As Guarionex was the most important personage, and his capture would probably be attended with most difficulty and danger, the Adelantado took the charge of it upon himself, at the head of one hundred men.

This stratagem, founded upon a knowledge of the attachment of the Indians to their chieftains, and calculated to spare a great effusion of blood, was completely successful. The villages having no walls nor other defences, were quietly entered at midnight, and the Spaniards, rushing suddenly into the houses where the caciques were quartered, seized and bound them, to the number of fourteen, and hurried them off to the fortress, before any effort could be made for their defence or rescue. The Indians, struck with terror, made no resistance, nor any show of hostility; surrounding the fortress in great multitudes, but without weapons, they filled the air with doleful howlings and lamentations, imploring the release of their chieftains. The Adelantado completed his enterprise with the spirit, sagacity, and moderation with which he had hitherto conducted it He obtained information of

the causes of this conspiracy, and the individuals most culpable. Two caciques, the principal movers of the insurrection, and who had most wrought upon the easy nature of Guarionex, were put to death. As to that unfortunate cacique, the Adelantado considering the deep wrongs he had suffered, and the slowness with which he had been provoked to revenge, magnanimously pardoned him; nay, according to Las Casas, he proceeded with stern justice against the Spaniard whose outrage on his wife had sunk so deeply in his heart. He extended his lenity also to the remaining chieftains of the conspiracy; promising great favors and rewards, if they should continue firm in their loyalty; but terrible punishments should they again be found in rebellion. The heart of Guarionex was subdued by this unexpected clemency. He made a speech to his people, setting forth the irresistible might and valor of the Spaniards; their great lenity to offenders, and their generosity to such as were faithful; and he earnestly exhorted them henceforth to cultivate their friendship. The Indians listened to him with attention; his praises of the white men were confirmed by their treatment of himself; when he had concluded, they took him up on their shoulders, bore him to his habitation with songs and shouts of joy, and for some time the tranquillity of the Vega was restored.*

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 6

CHAPTER III.

THE ADELANTADO REPAIRS TO XARAGUA TO RECEIVE TRIBUTE.

[1497.]

WITH all his energy and discretion, the Adelantado found it difficult to manage the proud and turbulent spirit of the colonists. They could ill brook the sway of a foreigner, who, when they were restive, curbed them with an iron hand. Don Bartholomew had not the same legitimate authority in their eyes as his brother. The admiral was the discoverer of the country, and the authorized representative of the sovereigns; yet even him they with difficulty brought themselves to obey. The Adelantado, on the contrary, was regarded by many as a mere intruder, assuming high command without authority from the crown, and shouldering himself into power on the merits and services of his brother. They spoke with impatience and indignation, also, of the long absence of the admiral, and his fancied inattention to their wants; little aware of the incessant anxieties he was suffering on their account, during his detention in Spain. The sagacious measure of the Adelantado in building the caravels, for some time diverted their attention. They watched their progress with solicitude, looking upon them as a means either of obtaining relief, or of abandoning the island. Aware that repining and discontented

men should never be left in idleness, Don Bartholomew kept them continually in movement; and indeed a state of constant activity was congenial to his own vigorous spirit. About this time messengers arrived from Behechio, cacique of Xaragua, informing him that he had large quantities of cotton, and other articles, in which his tribute was to be paid, ready for delivery. The Adelantado immediately set forth with a numerous train, to revisit this fruitful and happy region. He was again received with songs and dances, and all the national demonstrations of respect and amity by Behechio and his sister Anacaona. The latter appeared to be highly popular among the natives, and to have almost as much sway in Xaragua as her brother. Her natural ease, and the graceful dignity of her manners, more and more won the admiration of the Spaniards.

The Adelantado found thirty-two inferior caciques assembled in the house of Behechio, awaiting his arrival with their respective tributes. The cotton they had brought was enough to fill one of their houses. Having delivered this, they gratuitously offered the Adelantado as much cassava bread as he desired. The offer was most acceptable in the present necessitous state of the colony; and Don Bartholomew sent to Isabella for one of the caravels, which was nearly finished, to be dispatched as soon as possible to Xaragua, to be freighted with bread and cotton.

In the meantime, the natives brought from all quarters large supplies of provisions, and entertained their guests with continual festivity and banqueting. The early Spanish writers, whose imaginations, heated by the accounts of the voyagers, could not form an idea of the simplicity of savage life, especially in these newly discovered countries, which were supposed to border upon Asia, often speak in terms of oriental magnificence of the enter-

tainments of the natives, the palaces of the caciques, and the lords and ladies of their courts, as if they were describing the abodes of Asiatic potentates. The accounts given of Xaragua, however, have a different character; and give a picture of savage life, in its perfection of idle and ignorant enjoyment. The troubles which distracted the other parts of devoted Hayti, had not reached the inhabitants of this pleasant region. Living among beautiful and fruitful groves, on the borders of a sea, apparently for ever tranquil and unvexed by storms; having few wants, and those readily supplied, they appeared emancipated from the common lot of labor, and to pass their lives in one uninterrupted holiday. When the Spaniards regarded the fertility and sweetness of this country, the gentleness of its people, and the beauty of its women, they pronounced it a perfect paradise.

At length the caravel arrived which was to be freighted with the articles of tribute. It anchored about six miles from the residence of Behechio, and Anacaona proposed to her brother that they should go together to behold what she called the great canoe of the white men. On their way to the coast, the Adelantado was lodged one night in a village, in a house where Anacaona treasured up those articles which she esteemed most rare and precious. They consisted of various manufactures of cotton, ingeniously wrought; of vessels of clay, moulded into different forms; of chairs, tables, and like articles of furniture, formed of ebony and other kinds of wood, and carved with various devices,—all evincing great skill and ingenuity, in a people who had no iron tools to work with. Such were the simple treasures of this Indian princess, of which she made numerous presents to her guest.

Nothing could exceed the wonder and delight of this intelli

gent woman, when she first beheld the ship. Her brother, who treated her with a fraternal fondness and respectful attention, worthy of civilized life, had prepared two canoes, gayly painted and decorated; one to convey her and her attendants, and the other for himself and his chieftains. Anacaona, however, preferred to embark, with her attendants, in the ship's boat with the Adelantado. As they approached the caravel, a salute was fired. At the report of the cannon, and the sight of the smoke, Anacaona, overcome with dismay, fell into the arms of the Adelantado, and her attendants would have leaped overboard, but the laughter and the cheerful words of Don Bartholomew speedily reassured them. As they drew nearer to the vessel, several instruments of martial music struck up, with which they were greatly delighted. Their admiration increased on entering on board. Accustomed only to their simple and slight canoes, every thing here appeared wonderfully vast and complicated. But when the anchor was weighed, the sails were spread, and, aided by a gentle breeze, they beheld this vast mass, moving apparently by its own volition, veering from side to side, and playing like a huge monster in the deep, the brother and sister remained gazing at each other in mute astonishment.* Nothing seems to have filled the mind of the most stoical savage with more wonder, than that sublime and beautiful triumph of genius, a ship under sail.

Having freighted and dispatched the caravel, the Adelantado made many presents to Behechio, his sister, and their attendants, and took leave of them, to return by land with his troops to Isabella. Anacaona showed great affliction at their parting, entreating him to remain some time longer with them, and appearing

* Peter Martyr decad. i. lib. v. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 6.

fearful that they had failed in their humble attempt to please him. She even offered to follow him to the settlement, nor would she be consoled until he had promised to return again to Xaragua.*

We cannot but remark the ability shown by the Adelantado in the course of his transient government of the island. Wonderfully alert and active, he made repeated marches of great extent, from one remote province to another, and was always at the post of danger at the critical moment. By skillful management, with a handful of men, he defeated a formidable insurrection without any effusion of blood. He conciliated the most inveterate enemies among the natives by great moderation, while he deterred all wanton hostilities by the infliction of signal punishments. He had made firm friends of the most important chieftains, brought their dominions under cheerful tribute, opened new sources of supplies for the colony, and procured relief from its immediate wants. Had his judicious measures been seconded by those under his command, the whole country would have been a scene of tranquil prosperity, and would have produced great revenues to the crown, without cruelty to the natives; but, like his brother the admiral, his good intentions and judicious arrangements were constantly thwarted by the vile passions and perverse conduct of others. While he was absent from Isabella, new mischiefs had been fomented there, which were soon to throw the whole island into confusion.

* Ramusio, vol. iii. p. 9.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSPIRACY OF ROLDAN.

[1497.]

THE prime mover of the present mischief was one Francisco Roldan, a man under the deepest obligations to the admiral. Raised by him from poverty and obscurity, he had been employed at first in menial capacities; but, showing strong natural talents, and great assiduity, he had been made ordinary alcalde, equivalent to justice of the peace. The able manner in which he acquitted himself in this situation, and the persuasion of his great fidelity and gratitude, induced Columbus, on departing for Spain, to appoint him alcalde mayor, or chief judge of the island. It is true he was an uneducated man, but, as there were as yet no intricacies of law in the colony, the office required little else than shrewd good sense and upright principles for its discharge.*

Roldan was one of those base spirits which grow venomous in the sunshine of prosperity. His benefactor had returned to Spain apparently under a cloud of disgrace; a long interval had elapsed without tidings from him; he considered him a fallen man, and began to devise how he might profit by his downfall. He was intrusted with an office inferior only to that of the Ade-

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 1.

lantado; the brothers of Columbus were highly unpopular; he imagined it possible to ruin them, both with the colonists and with the government at home, and by dextrous cunning and bustling activity, to work his way into the command of the colony. The vigorous and somewhat austere character of the Adelantado for some time kept him in awe; but when he was absent from the settlement, Roldan was able to carry on his machinations with confidence. Don Diego, who then commanded at Isabella, was an upright and worthy man, but deficient in energy. Roldan felt himself his superior in talent and spirit, and his self-conceit was wounded at being inferior to him in authority. He soon made a party among the daring and dissolute of the community, and secretly loosened the ties of order and good government, by listening to and encouraging the discontents of the common people, and directing them against the character and conduct of Columbus and his brothers. He had heretofore been employed as superintendent of various public works; this brought him into familiar communication with workmen, sailors, and others of the lower order. His originally vulgar character enabled him to adapt himself to their intellects and manners, while his present station gave him consequence in their eyes. Finding them full of murmurs about hard treatment, severe toil, and the long absence of the admiral, he affected to be moved by their distresses. He threw out suggestions that the admiral might never return, being disgraced and ruined in consequence of the representations of Aguado. He sympathized with the hard treatment they experienced from the Adelantado and his brother Don Diego, who, being foreigners, could take no interest in their welfare, nor feel a proper respect for the pride of a Spaniard; but who used them merely as slaves, to build houses and fortresses for them, or to

swell their state and secure their power, as they marched about the island enriching themselves with the spoils of the caciques. By these suggestions he exasperated their feelings to such a height, that they had at one time formed a conspiracy to take away the life of the Adelantado, as the only means of delivering themselves from an odious tyrant. The time and place for the perpetration of the act were concerted. The Adelantado had condemned to death a Spaniard of the name of Berahona, a friend of Roldan, and of several of the conspirators. What was his offence is not positively stated, but from a passage in Las Casas,* there is reason to believe that he was the very Spaniard who had violated the favorite wife of Guarionex, the cacique of the Vega. The Adelantado would be present at the execution. It was arranged, therefore, that when the populace had assembled, a tumult should be made as if by accident, and in the confusion of the moment, Don Bartholomew should be dispatched with a poniard. Fortunately for the Adelantado, he pardoned the criminal, the assemblage did not take place, and the plan of the conspirators was disconcerted.†

When Don Bartholomew was absent collecting the tribute in Xaragua, Roldan thought it was a favorable time to bring affairs to a crisis. He had sounded the feelings of the colonists, and ascertained that there was a large party disposed for open sedition. His plan was to create a popular tumult, to interpose in his official character of alcalde mayor, to throw the blame upon the oppression and injustice of Don Diego and his brother, and, while he usurped the reins of authority, to appear as if actuated only by zeal for the peace and prosperity of the island, and the interests of the sovereigns.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 118. † Hist. de. Almirante, cap. 73.

A pretext soon presented itself for the proposed tumult. When the caravel returned from Xaragua laden with the Indian tributes, and the cargo was discharged, Don Diego had the vessel drawn up on the land, to protect it from accidents, or from any sinister designs of the disaffected colonists. Roldan immediately pointed this circumstance out to his partisans. He secretly inveighed against the hardship of having this vessel drawn on shore, instead of being left afloat for the benefit of the colony, or sent to Spain to make known their distresses. He hinted that the true reason was the fear of the Adelantado and his brother lest accounts should be carried to Spain of their misconduct, and he affirmed that they wished to remain undisturbed masters of the island, and keep the Spaniards there as subjects, or rather as slaves. The people took fire at these suggestions. They had long looked forward to the completion of the caravels as their only chance for relief; they now insisted that the vessel should be launched and sent to Spain for supplies. Don Diego endeavored to convince them of the folly of their demand, the vessel not being rigged and equipped for such a voyage; but the more he attempted to pacify them, the more unreasonable and turbulent they became. Roldan, also, became more bold and explicit in his instigations. He advised them to launch and take possession of the caravel, as the only mode of regaining their independence. They might then throw off the tyranny of these upstart strangers, enemies in their hearts to Spaniards, and might lead a life of ease and pleasure; sharing equally all that they might gain by barter in the island, employing the Indians as slaves to work for them, and enjoying unrestrained indulgence with respect to the Indian women.*

Don Diego received information of what was fermenting

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 73.

among the people, yet feared to come to an open rupture with Roldan in the present mutinous state of the colony. He suddenly detached him, therefore, with forty men, to the Vega, under pretext of overawing certain of the natives who had refused to pay their tribute, and had shown a disposition to revolt. Roldan made use of this opportunity to strengthen his faction. He made friends and partisans among the discontented caciques, secretly justifying them in their resistance to the imposition of tribute, and promising them redress. He secured the devotion of his own soldiers by great acts of indulgence, disarming and dismissing such as refused full participation in his plans, and returned with his little band to Isabella, where he felt secure of a strong party among the common people.

The Adelantado had by this time returned from Xaragua; but Roldan, feeling himself at the head of a strong faction, and arrogating to himself great authority from his official station, now openly demanded that the caravel should be launched, or permission given to himself and his followers to launch it. The Adelantado peremptorily refused, observing that neither he nor his companions were mariners, nor was the caravel furnished and equipped for sea, and that neither the safety of the vessel, nor of the people, should be endangered by their attempt to navigate her.

Roldan perceived that his motives were suspected, and felt that the Adelantado was too formidable an adversary to contend with in any open sedition at Isabella. He determined, therefore, to carry his plans into operation in some more favorable part of the island, always trusting to excuse any open rebellion against the authority of Don Bartholomew, by representing it as a patriotic opposition to his tyranny over Spaniards. He had seventy well-armed and determined men under his command, and he trusted.

on erecting his standard, to be joined by all the dissaffected throughout the island. He set off suddenly, therefore, for the Vega, intending to surprise the fortress of Conception, and by getting command of that post and the rich country adjacent, to set the Adelantado at defiance.

He stopped, on his way, at various Indian villages in which the Spaniards were distributed, endeavoring to enlist the latter in his party, by holding out promises of great gain and free living. He attempted also to seduce the natives from their allegiance, by promising them freedom from all tribute. Those caciques with whom he had maintained a previous understanding, received him with open arms; particularly one who had taken the name of Diego Marque, whose village he made his head-quarters, being about two leagues from Fort Conception. He was disappointed in his hopes of surprising the fortress. Its commander, Miguel Ballester, was an old and stanch soldier, both resolute and wary. He drew himself into his strong-hold on the approach of Roldan, and closed his gates. His garrison was small, but the fortification, situated on the side of a hill, with a river running at its foot, was proof against any assault. Roldan had still some hopes that Ballester might be disaffected to government, and might be gradually brought into his plans, or that the garrison would be disposed to desert, tempted by the licentious life which he permitted among his followers. In the neighborhood was the town inhabited by Guarionex. Here were quartered thirty soldiers, under the command of Captain Garcia de Barrantes. Roldan repaired thither with his armed force, hoping to enlist Barrantes and his party; but the captain shut himself up with his men in a fortified house, refusing to permit them to hold any communication with Roldan. The latter threatened to set fire to the house; but after

a little consideration, contented himself with seizing their store of provisions, and then marched towards Fort Conception, which was not quite half a league distant.*

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74.

Extract of a letter from T. S. Heneken, Esq.—1847. Fort Conception is situated at the foot of a hill now called Santo Cerro. It is constructed of bricks, and is almost as entire at the present day as when just finished. It stands in the gloom of an exuberant forest which has invaded the scene of former bustle and activity; a spot once considered of great importance and surrounded by swarms of intelligent beings.

What has become of the countless multitudes this fortress was intended to awe? Not a trace of them remains excepting in the records of history. The silence of the tomb prevails where their habitations responded to their songs and dances. A few indigent Spaniards, living in miserable hovels, scattered widely apart in the bosom of the forest, are now the sole occupants of this once fruitful and beautiful region.

A Spanish town gradually grew up round the fortress; the ruins of which extend to a considerable distance. It was destroyed by an earthquake, at nine o'clock of the morning of Saturday, 20th April, 1564, during the celebration of mass. Part of the massive walls of a handsome church still remain, as well as those of a very large convent or hospital, supposed to have been constructed in pursuance of the testamentary dispositions of Columbus. The inhabitants who survived the catastrophe retired to a small chapel, on the banks of a river, about a league distant, where the new town of La Vega was afterwards built.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADELANTADO REPAIRS TO THE VEGA IN RELIEF OF FORT CONCEPTION.—HIS INTERVIEW WITH ROLDAN.

[1497.]

THE Adelantado had received intelligence of the flagitious proceedings of Roldan, yet hesitated for a time to set out in pursuit of him. He had lost all confidence in the loyalty of the people around him, and knew not how far the conspiracy extended, nor on whom he could rely. Diego de Escobar, alcayde of the fortress of La Madalena, together with Adrian de Moxica and Pedro de Valdivieso, all principal men, were in league with Roldan. He feared that the commander of Fort Conception might likewise be in the plot, and the whole island in arms against him. He was reassured, however, by tidings from Miguel Ballaster. That loyal veteran wrote to him pressing letters for succor; representing the weakness of his garrison, and the increasing forces of the rebels.

Don Bartholomew hastened to his assistance with his accustomed promptness, and threw himself with a reinforcement into the fortress. Being ignorant of the force of the rebels, and doubtful of the loyalty of his own followers, he determined to adopt mild measures. Understanding that Roldan was quartered at a village but half a league distant, he sent a message to him,

remonstrating on the flagrant irregularity of his conduct, the injury it was calculated to produce in the island, and the certain ruin it must bring upon himself, and summoning him to appear at the fortress, pledging his word for his personal safety. Roldan repaired accordingly to Fort Conception, where the Adelantado held a parley with him from a window, demanding the reason of his appearing in arms, in opposition to royal authority. Roldan replied boldly, that he was in the service of his sovereigns, defending their subjects from the oppression of men who sought their destruction. The Adelantado ordered him to surrender his staff of office, as alcalde mayor, and to submit peaceably to superior authority. Roldan refused to resign his office, or to put himself in the power of Don Bartholomew, whom he charged with seeking his life. He refused also to submit to any trial, unless commanded by the king. Pretending, however, to make no resistance to the peaceable exercise of authority, he offered to go with his followers, and reside at any place the Adelantado might appoint. The latter immediately designated the village of the cacique Diego Colon, the same native of the Lucayos Islands who had been baptized in Spain, and had since married a daughter of Guarionex. Roldan objected, pretending there were not sufficient provisions to be had there for the subsistence of his men, and departed, declaring that he would seek a more eligible residence elsewhere.*

He now proposed to his followers to take possession of the remote province of Xaragua. The Spaniards who had returned thence gave enticing accounts of the life they had led there; of the fertility of the soil, the sweetness of the climate, the hospi-

* Herrera, decad i. lib. iii. cap. 7. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74.

tality and gentleness of the people, their feasts, dances, and various amusements, and, above all, the beauty of the women; for they had been captivated by the naked charms of the dancing nymphs of Xaragua. In this delightful region, emancipated from the iron rule of the Adelantado, and relieved from the necessity of irksome labor, they might lead a life of perfect freedom and indulgence, and have a world of beauty at their command. In short, Roldan drew a picture of loose sensual enjoyment, such as he knew to be irresistible with men of idle and dissolute habits. His followers acceded with joy to his proposition. Some preparations, however, were necessary to carry it into effect. Taking advantage of the absence of the Adelantado, he suddenly marched with his band to Isabella, and entering it in a manner by surprise, endeavored to launch the caravel, with which they might sail to Xaragua. Don Diego Columbus hearing the tumult, issued forth with several cavaliers; but such was the force of the mutineers and their menacing conduct, that he was obliged to withdraw, with his adherents, into the fortress. Roldan held several parleys with him, and offered to submit to his command, provided he would set himself up in opposition to his brother the Adelantado. His proposition was treated with scorn. The fortress was too strong to be assailed with success; he found it impossible to launch the caravel, and feared the Adelantado might return, and he be inclosed between two forces. He proceeded, therefore, in all haste to make provisions for the proposed expedition to Xaragua. Still pretending to act in his official capacity, and to do every thing from loyal motives, for the protection and support of the oppressed subjects of the crown, he broke open the royal warehouse, with shouts of "Long live the king!" supplied his followers with arms, ammunition, clothing, and whatever they desired

from the public stores; proceeded to the inclosure where the cattle and other European animals were kept to breed, took such as he thought necessary for his intended establishment, and permitted his followers to kill such of the remainder as they might want for present supply. Having committed this wasteful ravage, he marched in triumph out of Isabella.* Reflecting, however on the prompt and vigorous character of the Adelantado, he felt that his situation would be but little secure with such an active enemy behind him; who, on extricating himself from present perplexities, would not fail to pursue him to his proposed paradise of Xaragua. He determined, therefore, to march again to the Vega, and endeavor either to get possession of the person of the Adelantado, or to strike some blow, in his present crippled state, that should disable him from offering further molestation. Returning, therefore, to the vicinity of Fort Conception, he endeavored in every way, by the means of subtle emissaries, to seduce the garrison to desertion, or to excite it to revolt.

The Adelantado dared not take the field with his forces, having no confidence in their fidelity. He knew that they listened wistfully to the emissaries of Roldan, and contrasted the meagre fare and stern discipline of the garrison, with the abundant cheer and easy misrule that prevailed among the rebels. To counteract these seductions, he relaxed from his usual strictness, treating his men with great indulgence, and promising them large rewards. By these means he was enabled to maintain some degree of loyalty amongst his forces, his service having the advantage over that of Roldan, of being on the side of government and law.

Finding his attempts to corrupt the garrison unsuccessful, and

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7

fearing some sudden sally from the vigorous Adelantado, Roldan drew off to a distance, and sought by insidious means to strengthen his own power, and weaken that of the government. He asserted equal right to manage the affairs of the island with the Adelantado, and pretended to have separated from him on account of his being passionate and vindictive in the exercise of his authority. He represented him as the tyrant of the Spaniards, the oppressor of the Indians. For himself, he assumed the character of a redresser of grievances and champion of the injured. He pretended to feel a patriotic indignation at the affronts heaped upon Spaniards by a family of obscure and arrogant foreigners; and professed to free the natives from tributes wrung from them by these rapacious men for their own enrichment, and contrary to the beneficent intentions of the Spanish monarchs. He connected himself closely with the Carib cacique Manicaotex, brother of the late Caonabo, whose son and nephew were in his possession as hostages for payment of tributes. This warlike chieftain he conciliated by presents and caresses, bestowing on him the appellation of brother.* The unhappy natives, deceived by his professions, and overjoyed at the idea of having a protector in arms for their defence, submitted cheerfully to a thousand impositions, supplying his followers with provisions in abundance, and bringing to Roldan all the gold they could collect; voluntarily yielding him heavier tributes than those from which he pretended to free them.

The affairs of the island were now in a lamentable situation. The Indians, perceiving the dissensions among the white men, and encouraged by the protection of Roldan, began to throw off all allegiance to the government. The caciques at a distance

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. lib. i. cap. 118.

ceased to send in their tributes, and those who were in the vicinity were excused by the Adelantado, that by indulgence he might retain their friendship in this time of danger. Roldan's faction daily gained strength; they ranged insolently and at large in the open country, and were supported by the misguided natives; while the Spaniards who remained loyal, fearing conspiracies among the natives, had to keep under shelter of the fort, or in the strong houses which they had erected in the villages. The commanders were obliged to palliate all kinds of slights and indignities, both from their soldiers and from the Indians, fearful of driving them to sedition by any severity. The clothing and munitions of all kinds, either for maintenance or defence, were rapidly wasting away, and the want of all supplies or tidings from Spain was sinking the spirits of the well-affected into despondency. The Adelantado was shut up in Fort Conception, in daily expectation of being openly besieged by Roldan, and was secretly informed that means were taken to destroy him, should he issue from the walls of the fortress.*

Such was the desperate state to which the colony was reduced, in consequence of the long detention of Columbus in Spain, and the impediments thrown in the way of all his measures for the benefit of the island by the delays of cabinets and the chicanery of Fonseca and his satellites. At this critical juncture, when faction reigned triumphant, and the colony was on the brink of ruin, tidings were brought to the Vega that Pedro Fernandez Coronal had arrived at the port of San Domingo, with two ships, bringing supplies of all kinds, and a strong reinforcement of troops.†

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 119.

† Las Casas. Herrera. Hist. del Almirante.

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND INSURRECTION OF GUARIONEX, AND HIS FLIGHT TO THE MOUNTAINS OF CIGUAY.

[1498.]

THE arrival of Coronal, which took place on the third of February, was the salvation of the colony. The reinforcements of troops, and of supplies of all kinds, strengthened the hands of Don Bartholomew. The royal confirmation of his title and authority as Adelantado at once dispelled all doubts as to the legitimacy of his power; and the tidings that the admiral was in high favor at court, and would soon arrive with a powerful squadron, struck consternation into those who had entered into the rebellion on the presumption of his having fallen into disgrace.

The Adelantado no longer remained mewed up in his fortress, but set out immediately for San Domingo with a part of his troops, although a much superior rebel force was at the village of the cacique Guarionex, at a very short distance. Roldan followed slowly and gloomily with his party, anxious to ascertain the truth of these tidings, to make partisans, if possible, among those who had newly arrived, and to take advantage of every circumstance that might befriend his rash and hazardous projects. The Adelantado left strong guards on the passes of the roads to prevent his near approach to San Domingo, but Roldan paused within a few leagues of the place.

When the Adelantado found himself secure in San Domingo with this augmentation of force, and the prospect of a still greater reinforcement at hand, his magnanimity prevailed over his indignation, and he sought by gentle means to allay the popular seditions, that the island might be restored to tranquillity before his brother's arrival. He considered that the colonists had suffered greatly from the want of supplies; that their discontents had been heightened by the severities he had been compelled to inflict; and that many had been led to rebellion by doubts of the legitimacy of his authority. While, therefore, he proclaimed the royal act sanctioning his title and powers, he promised amnesty for all past offences, on condition of immediate return to allegiance. Hearing that Roldan was within five leagues of San Domingo with his band, he sent Pedro Fernandez Coronal, who had been appointed by the sovereigns alguazil mayor of the island, to exhort him to obedience, promising him oblivion of the past. He trusted that the representations of a discreet and honorable man like Coronal, who had been witness of the favor in which his brother stood in Spain, would convince the rebels of the hopelessness of their course.

Roldan, however, conscious of his guilt, and doubtful of the clemency of Don Bartholomew, feared to venture within his power; he determined, also, to prevent his followers from communicating with Coronal, lest they should be seduced from him by the promise of pardon. When that emissary, therefore, approached the encampment of the rebels, he was opposed in a narrow pass by a body of archers, with their cross-bows leveled. "Halt there! traitor!" cried Roldan, "had you arrived eight days later, we should all have been united as one man."*

In vain Coronal endeavored by fair reasoning and earnest en

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 8.

treaty to win this perverse and turbulent man from his career. Roldan answered with hardihood and defiance, professing to oppose only the tyranny and misrule of the Adelantado, but to be ready to submit to the admiral on his arrival. He, and several of his principal confederates, wrote letters to the same effect to their friends in San Domingo, urging them to plead their cause with the admiral when he should arrive, and to assure him of their disposition to acknowledge his authority.

When Coronal returned with accounts of Roldan's contumacy, the Adelantado proclaimed him and his followers traitors. That shrewd rebel, however, did not suffer his men to remain within either the seduction of promise or the terror of menace; he immediately set out on his march for his promised land of Xaragua, trusting to impair every honest principle and virtuous tie of his misguided followers by a life of indolence and libertinage.

In the meantime the mischievous effects of his intrigues among the caciques became more and more apparent. No sooner had the Adelantado left Fort Conception, than a conspiracy was formed among the natives to surprise it. Guarionex was at the head of this conspiracy, moved by the instigations of Roldan, who had promised him protection and assistance, and led on by the forlorn hope, in this distracted state of the Spanish forces, of relieving his paternal domains from the intolerable domination of usurping strangers. Holding secret communications with his tributary caciques, it was concerted that they should all rise simultaneously and massacre the soldiery, quartered in small parties in their villages; while he, with a chosen force, should surprise the fortress of Conception. The night of the full moon was fixed upon for the insurrection.

One of the principal caciques, however, not being a correct

observer of the heavenly bodies, took up arms before the appointed night, and was repulsed by the soldiers quartered in his village. The alarm was given, and the Spaniards were all put on the alert. The cacique fled to Guarionex for protection, but the chieftain enraged at his fatal blunder, put him to death upon the spot.

No sooner did the Adelantado hear of this fresh conspiracy, than he put himself on the march for the Vega with a strong body of men. Guarionex did not await his coming. He saw that every attempt was fruitless to shake off these strangers, who had settled like a curse upon his territories. He had found their very friend ship withering and destructive, and he now dreaded their vengeance. Abandoning, therefore, his rightful domain, the once happy Vega, he fled with his family and a small band of faithful followers to the mountains of Ciguay. This is a lofty chain, extending along the north side of the island, between the Vega and the sea. The inhabitants were the most robust and hardy tribe of the island, and far more formidable than the mild inhabitants of the plains. It was a part of this tribe which displayed hostility to the Spaniards in the course of the first voyage of Columbus, and in a skirmish with them in the Gulf of Semana the first drop of native blood had been shed in the New World. The reader may remember the frank and confiding conduct of these people the day after the skirmish, and the intrepid faith with vhich their cacique trusted himself on board of the caravel of the admiral, and in the power of the Spaniards. It was to this same cacique, named Mayobanex, that the fugitive chieftain of the Vega now applied for refuge. He came to his residence at an Indian town near Cape Cabron, about forty leagues east of Isabella, and implored shelter for his wife and children, and his handful of loyal followers. The noble-minded cacique of the

mountains received him with open arms. He not only gave an asylum to his family, but engaged to stand by him in his distress, to defend his cause, and share his desperate fortunes.* Men in civilized life learn magnanimity from precept, but their most generous actions are often rivaled by the deeds of untutored savages, who act only from natural impulse.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., cap. 121, MS. Peter Martyr, decad. i. cap. 5.

CHAPTER VII.

CAMPAIGN OF THE ADELANTADO IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CIGUAY.

[1498]

Aided by his mountain ally, and by bands of hardy Ciguayans, Guarionex made several descents into the plain, cutting off straggling parties of the Spaniards, laying waste the villages of the natives which continued in allegiance to them, and destroying the fruits of the earth. The Adelantado put a speedy stop to these molestations; but he determined to root out so formidable an adversary from the neighborhood. Shrinking from no danger nor fatigue, and leaving nothing to be done by others, which he could do himself, he set forth in the spring with a band of ninety men, a few cavalry, and a body of Indians, to penetrate the Ciguay mountains.

After passing a steep defile, rendered almost impracticable for troops by rugged rocks and exuberant vegetation, he descended into a beautiful valley or plain, extending along the coast, and embraced by arms of the mountains which approached the sea. His advance into the country was watched by the keen eyes of Indian scouts, who lurked among rocks and thickets. As the Spaniards were seeking the ford of a river at the entrance of the plain, two of these spies darted from among the bushes on its

bank. One flung himself headlong into the water, and swimming across the mouth of the river escaped; the other being taken, gave information that six thousand Indians lay in ambush on the opposite shore, waiting to attack them as they crossed.

The Adelantado advanced with caution, and finding a shallow place, entered the river with his troops. They were scarcely midway in the stream when the savages, hideously painted, and looking more like fiends than men, burst from their concealment. The forest rang with their yells and howlings. They discharged a shower of arrows and lances, by which, notwithstanding the protection of their targets, many of the Spaniards were wounded. The Adelantado, however, forced his way across the river, and the Indians took to flight. Some were killed, but their swiftness of foot, their knowledge of the forest, and their dexterity in winding through the most tangled thickets, enabled the greater number to elude the pursuit of the Spaniards, who were encumbered with armor, targets, cross-bows, and lances.

By the advice of one of his Indian guides, the Adelantado pressed forward along the valley to reach the residence of Mayobanex, at Cabron. In the way he had several skirmishes with the natives, who would suddenly rush forth with furious war-cries from ambuscades among the bushes, discharge their weapons, and take refuge again in the fastnesses of their rocks and forests, inaccessible to the Spaniards.

Having taken several prisoners, the Adelantado sent one accompanied by an Indian of a friendly tribe, as a messenger to Mayobanex, demanding the surrender of Guarionex; promising friendship and protection in case of compliance, but threatening, in case of refusal, to lay waste his territory with fire and sword. The cacique listened attentively to the messenger: "Tell the

Spaniards," said he in reply, "that they are bad men, cruel and tyrannical; usurpers of the territories of others, and shedders of innocent blood. I desire not the friendship of such men; Guarionex is a good man, he is my friend, he is my guest, he has fled to me for refuge, I have promised to protect him, and I will keep my word."

This magnanimous reply, or rather defiance, convinced the Adelantado that nothing was to be gained by friendly overtures. When severity was required, he could be a stern soldier. He immediately ordered the village in which he had been quartered, and several others in the neighborhood, to be set on fire. He then sent further messengers to Mayobanex, warning him that, unless he deliverd up the fugitive cacique, his whole dominions should be laid waste in like manner; and he would see nothing in every direction but the smoke and flames of burning villages. Alarmed at this impending destruction, the Ciguayans surrounded their chieftain with clamorous lamentations, cursing the day that Guarionex had taken refuge among them, and urging that he should be given up for the salvation of the country The generous cacique was inflexible. He reminded them of the many virtues of Guarionex, and the sacred claims he had on their hospitality, and declared he would abide all evils, rather than it should ever be said Mayobanex had betrayed his guest.

The people retired with sorrowful hearts, and the chieftain, summoning Guarionex into his presence, again pledged his word to protect him, though it should cost him his dominions. He sent no reply to the Adelantado, and lest further messages might tempt the fidelity of his subjects, he placed men in ambush, with orders to slay any messenger who might approach. They had not lain

in wait long, before they beheld two men advancing through the forest, one of whom was a captive Ciguayan, and the other an Indian ally of the Spaniards. They were both instantly slain. The Adelantado was following at no great distance, with only ten foot soldiers and four horsemen. When he found his messengers lying dead in the forest path, transfixed with arrows, he was greatly exasperated, and resolved to deal rigorously with this obstinate tribe. He advanced, therefore, with all his force to Cabron, where Mayobanex and his army were quartered. At his approach the inferior caciques and their adherents fled, overcome by terror of the Spaniards. Finding himself thus deserted, Mayobanex took refuge with his family in a secret part of the mountains. Several of the Ciguayans sought for Guarionex, to kill him or deliver him up as a propitiatory offering, but he fled to the heights, where he wandered about alone, in the most savage and desolate places.

The density of the forests and the ruggedness of the mountains rendered this expedition excessively painful and laborious, and protracted it far beyond the time that the Adelantado had contemplated. His men suffered, not merely from fatigue, but hunger. The natives had all fled to the mountains; their villages remained empty and desolate; all the provisions of the Spaniards consisted of cassava bread, and such roots and herbs as their Indian allies could gather for them, with now and then a few utias taken with the assistance of their dogs. They slept almost always on the ground, in the open air, under the trees, exposed to the heavy dew which falls in this climate. For three months they were thus ranging the mountains, until almost worn out with toil and hard fare. Many of them had farms in the neighborhood of Fort Conception, which required their attention; they,

therefore, entreated permission, since the Indians were terrified and dispersed, to return to their abodes in the Vega.

The Adelantado granted many of them passports and an allowance out of the scanty stock of bread which remained. Retaining only thirty men, he resolved with these to search every den and cavern of the mountains until he should find the two caciques. It was difficult, however, to trace them in such a wilderness. There was no one to give a clue to their retreat, for the whole country was abandoned. There were the habitations of men, but not a human being to be seen; or if, by chance, they caught some wretched Indian stealing forth from the mountains in quest of food, he always professed utter ignorance of the hiding-place of the caciques.

It happened, one day, however, that several Spaniards, while hunting utias, captured two of the followers of Mayobanex, who were on their way to a distant village in search of bread. They were taken to the Adelantado, who compelled them to betray the place of concealment of their chieftain, and to act as guides. Twelve Spaniards volunteered to go in quest of him. Stripping themselves naked, staining and painting their bodies so as to look like Indians, and covering their swords with palm-leaves, they were conducted by the guides to the retreat of the unfortunate Mayobanex. They came secretly upon him, and found him surrounded by his wife and children and a few of his household, totally unsuspicious of danger. Drawing their swords, the Spaniards rushed upon them and made them all prisoners. When they were brought to the Adelantado, he gave up all further search after Guarionex, and returned to Fort Conception.

Among the prisoners thus taken was the sister of Mayobanex. She was the wife of another cacique of the mountains, whose ter

ritories had never yet been visited by the Spaniards; and she was reputed to be one of the most beautiful women of the island. Tenderly attached to her brother, she had abandoned the security of her own dominions, and had followed him among rocks and precipices, participating in all his hardships, and comforting him with a woman's sympathy and kindness. When her husband heard of her captivity, he hastened to the Adelantado and offered to submit himself and all his possessions to his sway, if his wife might be restored to him. The Adelantado accepted his offer of allegiance, and released his wife and several of his subjects who had been captured. The cacique, faithful to his word, became a firm and valuable ally of the Spaniards, cultivating large tracts of land, and supplying them with great quantities of bread and other provisions.

Kindness appears never to have been lost upon the people of this island. When this act of clemency reached the Ciguayans, they came in multitudes to the fortress, bringing presents of various kinds, promising allegiance, and imploring the release of Mayobanex and his family. The Adelantado granted their prayers in part, releasing the wife and household of the cacique, but still detaining him prisoner to insure the fidelity of his subjects.

In the meantime the unfortunate Guarionex, who had been hiding in the wildest parts of the mountains, was driven by hunger to venture down occasionally into the plain in quest of food. The Ciguayans looking upon him as the cause of their misfortunes, and perhaps hoping by his sacrifice to procure the release of their chieftain, betrayed his haunts to the Adelantado. A party was dispatched to secure him. They lay in wait in the path by which he usually returned to the mountains. As the unhappy cacique, after one of his famished excursions, was returning to his den

among the cliffs, he was surprised by the lurking Spaniards, and brought in chains to Fort Conception. After his repeated insurrections, and the extraordinary zeal and perseverance displayed in his pursuit, Guarionex expected nothing less than death from the vengeance of the Adelantado. Don Bartholomew, however, though stern in his policy, was neither vindictive nor cruel in his nature. He considered the tranquillity of the Vega sufficiently secured by the captivity of the cacique; and ordered him to be detained a prisoner and hostage in the fortress. The Indian hostilities in this important part of the island being thus brought to a conclusion, and precautions taken to prevent their recurrence, Don Bartholomew returned to the city of San Domingo, where, shortly after his arrival, he had the happiness of receiving his brother, the admiral, after nearly two years and six months' absence.*

Such was the active, intrepid, and sagacious, but turbulent and disastrous administration of the Adelantado, in which we find evidences of the great capacity, the mental and bodily vigor of this self-formed and almost self-taught man. He united, in a singular degree, the sailor, the soldier, and the legislator. Like his brother, the admiral, his mind and manners rose immediately to the level of his situation, showing no arrogance nor ostentation, and exercising the sway of sudden and extraordinary power, with the sobriety and moderation of one who had been born to rule. He has been accused of severity in his government, but no instance appears of a cruel or wanton abuse of authority. If he was stern towards the factious Spaniards, he was just; the disas-

* The particulars of this chapter are chiefly from P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. vi.; the manuscript history of Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 121; and Herrera, Hist Ind. decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 8, 9.

ters of his administration were not produced by his own rigor but by the perverse passions of others, which called for its exercise; and the admiral, who had more suavity of manner and benevolence of heart, was not more fortunate in conciliating the good will, and insuring the obedience of the colonists. The merits of Don Bartholomew do not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated by the world. His portrait has been suffered to remain too much in the shade; it is worthy of being brought into the light, as a companion to that of his illustrious brother. Less amiable and engaging, perhaps, in its lineaments, and less characterized by magnanimity, its traits are nevertheless bold, generous, and heroic, and stamped with iron firmness.

BOOK XII.

CHAPTER I.

CONFUSION IN THE ISLAND.—PROCEEDINGS OF THE REBELS AT XARAGUA.

[August 30, 1498.]

COLUMBUS arrived at San Domingo, wearied by a long and arduous voyage and worn down by infirmities; both mind and body craved repose, but from the time he first entered into public life, he had been doomed never again to taste the sweets of tranquillity. The island of Hispaniola, the favorite child as it were of his hopes, was destined to involve him in perpetual troubles, to fetter his fortunes, impede his enterprises, and imbitter the conclusion of his life. What a scene of poverty and suffering had this opulent and lovely island been rendered by the bad passions of a few despicable men! The wars with the natives and the seditions among the colonists had put a stop to the labors of the mines, and all hopes of wealth were at an end. The horrors of famine had succeeded to those of war. The cultivation of the earth had been generally neglected; several of the provinces had been desolated during the late troubles; a great part of the Indians had fled to the mountains, and those who remained had lost all heart

to labor, seeing the produce of their toils liable to be wrested from them by ruthless strangers. It is true, the Vega was once more tranquil, but it was a desolate tranquillity. That beautiful region, which the Spaniards but four years before had found so populous and happy, seeming to inclose in its luxuriant bosom all the sweets of nature, and to exclude all the cares and sorrows of the world, was now a scene of wretchedness and repining. Many of those Indian towns, where the Spaniards had been detained by genial hospitality, and almost worshiped as beneficent deities, were now silent and deserted. Some of their late inhabitants were lurking among rocks and caverns; some were reduced to slavery; many had perished with hunger, and many had fallen by the sword. It seems almost incredible, that so small a number of men, restrained too by well-meaning governors, could in so short a space of time have produced such wide-spreading miseries. But the principles of evil have a fatal activity. With every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief.

The evil passions of the white men, which had inflicted such calamities upon this innocent people, had insured likewise a merited return of suffering to themselves. In no part was this more truly exemplified than among the inhabitants of Isabella, the most idle, factious, and dissolute of the island. The public works were unfinished; the gardens and fields they had begun to cultivate lay neglected: they had driven the natives from their vicinity by extortion and cruelty, and had rendered the country around them a solitary wilderness. Too idle to labor, and destitute of any resources with which to occupy their indolence, they quarreled among themselves, mutinied against their rulers, and

wasted their time in alternate riot and despondency. Many of the soldiery quartered about the island, had suffered from ill health during the late troubles, being shut up in Indian villages where they could take no exercise, and obliged to subsist on food to which they could not accustom themselves. Those actively employed, had been worn down by hard service, long marches, and scanty food. Many of them were broken in constitution, and many had perished by disease. There was a universal desire to leave the island, and escape from miseries created by themselves. Yet this was the favored and fruitful land to which the eyes of philosophers and poets in Europe were fondly turned, as realizing the pictures of the golden age. So true it is, that the fairest Elysium fancy ever devised, would be turned into a purgatory by the passions of bad men!

One of the first measures of Columbus on his arrival, was to issue a proclamation approving of all the measures of the Adelantado, and denouncing Roldan and his associates. That turbulent man had taken possession of Xaragua, and been kindly received by the natives. He had permitted his followers to lead an idle and licentious life among its beautiful scenes, making the surrounding country and its inhabitants subservient to their pleasures and their passions. An event happened previous to their knowledge of the arrival of Columbus, which threw supplies into their hands, and strengthened their power. As they were one day loitering on the sea-shore, they beheld three caravels at a distance, the sight of which, in this unfrequented part of the ocean, filled them with wonder and alarm. The ships approached the land, and came to anchor. The rebels apprehended at first they were vessels dispatched in pursuit of them. Roldan, however, who was sagacious as he was bold, surmised them to be

ships which had wandered from their course, and been borne to the westward by the currents, and that they must be ignorant of the recent occurrences of the island. Enjoining secrecy on his men, he went on board, pretending to be stationed in that neighborhood for the purpose of keeping the natives in obedience, and collecting tribute. His conjectures as to the vessels were correct. They were, in fact, the three caravels detached by Columbus from his squadron at the Canary Islands, to bring supplies to the colonies. The captains, ignorant of the strength of the currents, which set through the Caribbean Sea, had been carried west far beyond their reckoning, until they had wandered to the coast of Xaragua.

Roldan kept his secret closely for three days. Being considered a man in important trust and authority, the captains did not hesitate to grant all his requests for supplies. He procured swords, lances, cross-bows, and various military stores; while his men, dispersed through the three vessels, were busy among the crews, secretly making partisans, representing the hard life of the colonists at San Domingo, and the ease and revelry in which they passed their time at Xaragua. Many of the crews had been shipped in compliance with the admiral's ill-judged proposition, to commute criminal punishments into transportation to the colony. They were vagabonds, the refuse of Spanish towns, and culprits from Spanish dungeons; the very men, therefore, to be wrought upon by such representations, and they promised to desert on the first opportunity and join the rebels.

It was not until the third day, that Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the most intelligent of the three captains, discovered the real character of the guests he had admitted so freely on board of his vessels. It was then too late; the mischief was effected. He and his fellow captains had many earnest conversations with Rol

dan, endeavoring to persuade him from his dangerous opposition to the regular authority. The certainty that Columbus was actually on his way to the island, with additional forces, and augmented authority, had operated strongly on his mind. He had, as has already been intimated, prepared his friends at San Domingo to plead his cause with the admiral, assuring him that he had only acted in opposition to the injustice and oppression of the Adelantado, but was ready to submit to Columbus on his arrival. Carvajal perceived that the resolution of Roldan and of several of his principal confederates was shaken, and flattered himself, that, if he were to remain some little time among the rebels, he might succeed in drawing them back to their duty. Contrary winds rendered it impossible for the ships to work up against the currents to San Domingo. It was arranged among the captains, therefore, that a large number of the people on board, artificers and others most important to the service of the colony, should proceed to the settlement by land. They were to be conducted by Juan Antonio Colombo, captain of one of the caravels, a relative of the admiral, and zealously devoted to his interests. Arana was to proceed with the ships, when the wind would permit, and Carvajal volunteered to remain on shore, to endeavor to bring the rebels to their allegiance.

On the following morning, Juan Antonio Colombo landed with forty men well armed with cross-bows, swords and lances, but was astonished to find himself suddenly deserted by all his party excepting eight. The deserters went off to the rebels, who received with exultation this important reinforcement of kindred spirits. Juan Antonio endeavored in vain by remonstrances and threats to bring them back to their duty. They were most of them convicted culprits, accustomed to detest order, and to set law at defiance. It was equally in vain that he appealed to Roldan, and

reminded him of his professions of loyalty to the government. The latter replied that he had no means of enforcing obedience; his was a mere "Monastery of Observation," where every one was at liberty to adopt the habit of the order. Such was the first of a long train of evils, which sprang from this most ill-judged expedient of peopling a colony with criminals, and thus mingling vice and villany with the fountain-head of its population.

Juan Antonio, grieved and disconcerted, returned on board with the few who remained faithful. Fearing further desertions, the two captains immediately put to sea, leaving Carvajal on shore, to prosecute his attempt at reforming the rebels. It was not without great difficulty and delay that the vessels reached San Domingo; the ship of Carvajal having struck on a sand-bank, and sustained great injury. By the time of their arrival, the greater part of the provisions with which they had been freighted was either exhausted or damaged. Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal arrived shortly afterwards by land, having been escorted to within six leagues of the place by several of the insurgents, to protect him from the Indians. He failed in his attempt to persuade the band to immediate submission; but Roldan had promised that the moment he heard of the arrival of Columbus, he would repair to the neighborhood of San Domingo, to be at hand to state his grievances, and the reasons of his past conduct, and to enter into a negotiation for the adjustment of all differences. Carvajal brought a letter from him to the admiral to the same purport; and expressed a confident opinion, from all that he observed of the rebels, that they might easily be brought back to their allegiance by an assurance of amnesty.*

* Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 149, 150. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 12. Hist del Almirante, cap. 77.

CHAPTER II.

NEGOTIATION OF THE ADMIRAL WITH THE REBELS.—DEPARTURE OF SHIPS FOR SPAIN.

[1498.]

NOTWITHSTANDING the favorable representations of Carvajal, Columbus was greatly troubled by the late event at Xaragua. He saw that the insolence of the rebels, and their confidence in their strength, must be greatly increased by the accession of such a large number of well-armed and desperate confederates. The proposition of Roldan to approach to the neighborhood of San Domingo, startled him. He doubted the sincerity of his professions, and apprehended great evils and dangers from so artful, daring, and turbulent a leader, with a rash and devoted crew at his command. The example of this lawless horde, roving at large about the island, and living in loose revel and open profligacy, could not but have a dangerous effect upon the colonists newly arrived; and when they were close at hand, to carry on secret intrigues, and to hold out a camp of refuge to all malcontents, the loyalty of the whole colony might be sapped and undermined.

Some measures were immediately necessary to fortify the fidelity of the people against such seductions. He was aware of a vehement desire among many to return to Spain; and of an assertion industriously propagated by the seditious, that he and

his brothers wished to detain the colonists on the island through motives of self-interest. On the 12th of September, therefore he issued a proclamation, offering free passage and provisions for the voyage to all who wished to return to Spain, in five vessels nearly ready to put to sea. He hoped by this means to relieve the colony from the idle and disaffected; to weaken the party of Roldan, and to retain none about him but such as were sound hearted and well-disposed.

He wrote at the same time to Miguel Ballester, the stanch and well-tried veteran who commanded the fortress of Conception, advising him to be upon his guard, as the rebels were coming into his neighborhood. He empowered him also to have an interview with Roldan; to offer him pardon and oblivion of the past, on condition of his immediate return to duty; and to invite him to repair to San Domingo to have an interview with the admiral, under a solemn, and, if required, a written assurance from the latter, of personal safety. Columbus was sincere in his intentions. He was of a benevolent and placable disposition, and singularly free from all vindictive feeling towards the many worthless and wicked men who heaped sorrow on his head.

Ballester had scarcely received this letter, when the rebels began to arrive at the village of Bonao. This was situated in a beautiful valley, or Vega, bearing the same name; about ten leagues from Fort Conception, and about twenty from San Domingo, in a well-peopled and abundant country. Here Pedro Requelme, one of the ringleaders of the sedition, had large possessions, and his residence became the head-quarters of the rebels Adrian de Moxica, a man of turbulent and mischievous character brought his detachment of dissolute ruffians to this place of ren-

dezvous. Roldan and others of the conspirators drew together there by different routes.

No sooner did the veteran Miguel Ballester hear of the arrival of Roldan, than he set forth to meet him. Ballester was a venerable man, gray-headed, and of a soldier-like demeanor Loyal, frank, and virtuous, of a serious disposition, and great simplicity of heart, he was well chosen as a mediator with rash and profligate men; being calculated to calm their passions by his sobriety; to disarm their petulance by his age; to win their confidence by his artless probity; and to awe their licentiousness by his spotless virtue.*

Ballester found Roldan in company with Pedro Riquelme, Pedro de Gamez, and Adrian de Moxica, three of his principal confederates. Flushed with a confidence of his present strength, Roldan treated the proffered pardon with contempt, declaring that he did not come there to treat of peace, but to demand the release of certain Indians captured unjustifiably, and about to be shipped to Spain as slaves, notwithstanding that he, in his capacity of alcalde mayor, had pledged his word for their protection. He declared that, until these Indians were given up, he would listen to no terms of compact; throwing out an insolent intimation at the same time, that he held the admiral and his fortunes in his hand, to make and mar them as he pleased.

The Indians here alluded to, were certain subjects of Guarionex, who had been incited by Roldan to resist the exaction of tribute, and who, under the sanction of his supposed authority, had engaged in the insurrections of the Vega. Roldan knew that the enslavement of the Indians was an unpopular feature in the government of the island, especially with the queen; and the art-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 153.

ful character of this man is evinced in his giving his opposition to Columbus the appearance of a vindication of the rights of the suffering islanders. Other demands were made of a highly insolent nature, and the rebels declared that, in all further negotiations, they would treat with no other intermediate agent than Carvajal, having had proofs of his fairness and impartiality in the course of their late communications with him at Xaragua.

This arrogant reply to his proffer of pardon was totally different from what the admiral had been led to expect, and placed him in an embarrassing situation. He seemed surrounded by treachery and falsehood. He knew that Roldan had friends and secret partisans even among those who professed to remain faithful; and he knew not how far the ramifications of the conspiracy might extend. A circumstance soon occurred to show the justice of his apprehensions. He ordered the men of San Domingo to appear under arms that he might ascertain the force with which he could take the field in case of necessity. A report was immediately circulated that they were to be led to Bonao against the rebels. Not above seventy men appeared under arms, and of these not forty were to be relied upon. One affected to be lame, another ill; some had relations, and others had friends among the followers of Roldan: almost all were disaffected to the service.*

Columbus saw that a resort to arms would betray his own weakness and the power of the rebels, and completely prostrate the dignity and authority of government. It was necessary to temporize, therefore, however humiliating such conduct might be deemed. He had detained the five ships for eighteen days in port, hoping in some way to have put an end to this rebellion, so as to send home favorable accounts of the island to the sovereigns

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 78.

The provisions of the ships, however, were wasting. The Indian prisoners on board were suffering and perishing; several of them threw themselves overboard, or were suffocated with heat in the holds of the vessels. He was anxious, also, that as many of the discontented colonists as possible should make sail for Spain before any commotion should take place.

On the 18th of October, therefore, the ships put to sea.* Columbus wrote to the sovereigns an account of the rebellion, and of his proffered pardon being refused. As Roldan pretended that it was a mere quarrel between him and the Adelantado, of which the admiral was not an impartial judge, the latter entreated that Roldan might be summoned to Spain, where the sovereigns might be his judges; or that an investigation might take place in presence of Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, who was friendly to Roldan, and of Miguel Ballester, as witness on the part of the Adelantado. He attributed, in a great measure, the troubles of this island to his own long detention in Spain, and the delays thrown in his way by those appointed to assist him, who had retarded the departure of the ships with supplies, until the colony had been reduced to the greatest scarcity. Hence had arisen discontent, murmuring, and finally rebellion. He entreated the sovereigns, in the most pressing manner, that the affairs of the colony might not be neglected, and those at Seville, who had charge of its concerns, might be instructed at least not to devise impediments instead of assistance. He alluded to his chastisement of the contemptible Ximeno Breviesca, the insolent minion of Fonseca, and entreated that neither that nor any other circumstance might be allowed to

* In one of these ships sailed the father of the venerable historian Las Casas, from whom he derived many of the facts of his history. Las Casas lib. i. cap. 153.

prejudice him in the royal favor, through the misrepresentations of designing men. He assured them that the natural resources of the island required nothing but good management to supply all the wants of the colonists; but that the latter were indolent and profligate. He proposed to send home, by every ship, as in the present instance, a number of the discontented and worthless, to be replaced by sober and industrious men. He begged also that ecclesiastics might be sent out for the instruction and conversion of the Indians; and, what was equally necessary, for the reformation of the dissolute Spaniards. He required also a man learned in the law, to officiate as judge over the island, together with several officers of the royal revenue. Nothing could surpass the soundness and policy of these suggestions; but unfortunately one clause marred the moral beauty of this excellent letter. He requested that for two years longer the Spaniards might be permitted to employ the Indians as slaves; only making use of such, however, as were captured in wars and insurrections. Columbus had the usage of the age in excuse for this suggestion; but it is at variance with his usual benignity of feeling, and his paternal conduct towards these unfortunate people.

At the same time he wrote another letter, giving an account of his recent voyage, accompanied by a chart, and by specimens of the gold, and particularly of the pearls found in the gulf of Paria. He called especial attention to the latter as being the first specimens of pearls found in the New World. It was in this letter that he described the newly discovered continent in such enthusiastic terms, as the most favored part of the east, the source of inexhaustible treasures, the supposed seat of the terrestrial Paradise; and he promised to prosecute the discovery of its

glorious realms with the three remaining ships, as soon as the affairs of the island should permit.

By this opportunity, Roldan and his friends likewise sent letters to Spain, endeavoring to justify their rebellion by charging Columbus and his brothers with oppression and injustice, and painting their whole conduct in the blackest colors. It would naturally be supposed that the representations of such men would have little weight in the balance against the tried merits and exalted services of Columbus: but they had numerous friends and relatives in Spain; they had the popular prejudice on their side, and there were designing persons in the confidence of the sovereigns ready to advocate their cause. Columbus, to use his own simple but affecting words, was "absent, envied, and a stranger."*

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 157.

CHAPTER III.

NEGOTIATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE REBELS.

[1498.]

The ships being dispatched, Columbus resumed his negotiation with the rebels; determined at any sacrifice to put an end to a sedition which distracted the island and interrupted all his plans of discovery. His three remaining ships lay idle in the harbor, though a region of apparently boundless wealth was to be explored. He had intended to send his brother on the discovery, but the active and military spirit of the Adelantado rendered his presence indispensable, in case the rebels should come to violence. Such were the difficulties encountered at every step of his generous and magnanimous enterprises; impeded at one time by the insidious intrigues of crafty men in place, and checked at another by the insolent turbulence of a handful of ruffians.

In his consultations with the most important persons about him, Columbus found that much of the popular discontent was attributed to the strict rule of his brother, who was accused of dealing out justice with a rigorous hand. Las Casas, however who saw the whole of the testimony collected from various sources with respect to the conduct of the Adelantado, acquits him of all charges of the kind and affirms that, with respect to Roldan in

particular, he had exerted great forbearance. Be this as it may Columbus now, by the advice of his counselors, resolved to try the alternative of extreme lenity. He wrote a letter to Roldan, dated the 20th of October, couched in the most conciliating terms, calling to mind past kindnesses, and expressing deep concern for the feud existing between him and the Adelantado. He entreated him, for the common good, and for the sake of his own reputation, which stood well with the sovereigns, not to persist in his present insubordination, and repeated the assurance, that he and his companions might come to him, under the faith of his word for the inviolability of their persons.

There was a difficulty as to who should be the bearer of this letter. The rebels had declared that they would receive no one as mediator but Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal. Strong doubts, however, existed in the minds of those about Columbus as to the integrity of that officer. They observed that he had suffered Roldan to remain two days on board of his caravel at Xaragua; had furnished him with weapons and stores; had neglected to detain him on board, when he knew him to be a rebel; had not exerted himself to retake the deserters; had been escorted on his way to San Domingo by the rebels, and had sent refreshments to them at Bonao. It was alleged, moreover, that he had given himself out as a colleague of Columbus, appointed by government to have a watch and control over his conduct. It was suggested, that, in advising the rebels to approach San Domingo, he had intended, in case the admiral did not arrive, to unite his pretended authority as colleague, to that of Roldan, as chief judge, and to seize upon the reins of government. Finally, the desire of the rebels to have him sent to them as an agent, was cited as proof that he was to join them as a leader, and that the standard of

rebellion was to be hoisted at Bonao.* These circumstances, for some time, perplexed Columbus: but he reflected that Carvajal, as far as he had observed his conduct, had behaved like a man of integrity; most of the circumstances alleged against him admitted of a construction in his favor; the rest were mere rumors, and he had unfortunately experienced, in his own case, how easily the fairest actions, and the fairest characters, may be falsified by rumor. He discarded, therefore, all suspicion, and determined to confide implicitly in Carvajal; nor had he ever any reason to repent of his confidence.

The admiral had scarcely dispatched this letter, when he received one from the leaders of the rebels, written several days previously. In this they not merely vindicated themselves from the charge of rebellion, but claimed great merit, as having dissuaded their followers from a resolution to kill the Adelantado, in revenge of his oppressions, prevailing upon them to await patiently for redress from the admiral. A month had elapsed since his arrival, during which they had waited anxiously for his orders, but he had manifested nothing but irritation against them. Considerations of honor and safety, therefore, obliged them to withdraw from his service, and they accordingly demanded their discharge. This letter was dated from Bonao, the 17th of October, and signed by Francisco Roldan, Adrian de Moxica, Pedro de Gamez, and Diego de Escobar.†

In the meantime, Carvajal arrived at Bonao, accompanied by Miguel Ballester. They found the rebels full of arrogance and presumption. The conciliating letter of the admiral, however, enforced by the earnest persuasions of Carvajal, and the admoni-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 78.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 79. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 13.

tions of the veteran Ballester, had a favorable effect on several of the leaders, who had more intellect than their brutal followers. Roldan, Gamez, Escobar, and two or three others, actually mounted their horses to repair to the admiral, but were detained by the clamorous opposition of their men; too infatuated with their idle, licentious mode of life, to relish the idea of a return to labor and discipline. These insisted that it was a matter which concerned them all; whatever arrangement was to be made, therefore, should be made in public, in writing, and subject to their approbation or dissent. A day or two elapsed before this clamor could be appeased. Roldan then wrote to the admiral, that his followers objected to his coming, unless a written assurance, or passport, were sent, protecting the persons of himself and such as should accompany him. Miguel Ballester wrote, at the same time, to the admiral, urging him to agree to whatever terms the rebels might demand. He represented their forces as continually augmenting, the soldiers of his garrison daily deserting to them; unless, therefore, some compromise were speedily effected, and the rebels shipped off to Spain, he feared that, not merely the authority, but even the person of the admiral would be in danger; for though the Hidalgos and the officers and servants immediately about him would, doubtless, die in his service, the common people were but little to be depended upon.*

Columbus felt the increasing urgency of the case, and sent the required passport. Roldan came to San Domingo; but, from his conduct, it appeared as if his object was to make partisans, and gain deserters, rather than to effect a reconciliation. He had several conversations with the admiral, and several letters passed between them. He made many complaints, and numerous de-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. lib. i. cap. 153.

mands; Columbus made large concessions, but some of the pretensions were too arrogant to be admitted.* Nothing definite was arranged. Roldan departed under the pretext of conferring with his people, promising to send his terms in writing. The admiral sent his Mayordomo, Diego de Salamanca, to treat in his behalf.†

On the 6th of November, Roldan wrote a letter from Bonao, containing his terms, and requesting that a reply might be sent to him to Conception, as scarcity of provisions obliged him to leave Bonao. He added that he should wait for a reply until the following Monday (the 11th). There was an insolent menace implied in this note, accompanied as it was by insolent demands. The admiral found it impossible to comply with the latter; but to manifest his lenient disposition, and to take from the rebels all plea of rigor, he had a proclamation affixed for thirty days at the gate of the fortress, promising full indulgence and complete oblivion of the past to Roldan and his followers, on condition of their presenting themselves before him and returning to their allegiance to the crown within a month; together with free conveyance for all such as wished to return to Spain; but threatening to execute rigorous justice upon those who should not appear within the limited time. A copy of this paper he sent to Roldan by Carvajal, with a letter, stating the impossibility of compliance with his terms, but offering to agree to any compact drawn up with the approbation of Carvajal and Salamanca.

When Carvajal arrived, he found the veteran Ballester actually besieged in his fortress of Conception by Roldan, under pretext of claiming, in his official character of alcalde mayor, a culprit who had taken refuge there from justice. He had cut off the supply of water from the fort, by way of distressing it into a

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. i. 158. † Hist. del Almirante, cap. 79

surrender When Carvajal posted up the proclamation of the admiral on the gate of the fortress, the rebels scoffed at the proffered amnesty, saying that, in a little while, they would oblige the admiral to ask the same at their hands. The earnest intercessions of Carvajal, however, brought the leaders at length to reflection, and through his mediation articles of capitulation were drawn up. By these it was agreed that Roldan and his followers should embark for Spain from the port of Xaragua in two ships, to be fitted out and victualed within fifty days. That they should each receive from the admiral a certificate of good conduct, and an order for the amount of their pay, up to the actual date. That slaves should be given to them, as had been given to others, in consideration of services performed; and as several of their company had wives, natives of the island, who were pregnant, or had lately been delivered, they might take them with them, if willing to go, in place of the slaves. That satisfaction should be made for property of some of the company which had been sequestrated, and for live stock which had belonged to Francisco Roldan. There were other conditions, providing for the security of their persons: and it was stipulated that, if no reply were received to these terms within eight days, the whole should be void.*

This agreement was signed by Roldan and his companions at Fort Conception on the 16th of November, and by the admiral at San Domingo on the 21st. At the same time, he proclaimed a further act of grace, permitting such as chose to remain in the island either to come to San Domingo, and enter into the royal service, or to hold lands in any part of the island. They preferred, however, to follow the fortunes of Roldan, who departed with his band for Xaragua, to await the arrival of the ships, ac

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 80.

companied by Miguel Ballester, sent by the admiral to superintend the preparations for their embarkation.

Columbus was deeply grieved to have his projected enterprise to Terra Firma impeded by such contemptible obstacles, and the ships which should have borne his brother to explore that newly-found continent, devoted to the use of this turbulent and worthless rabble. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection, that all the mischief which had so long been lurking in the island, would thus be at once shipped off, and thenceforth every thing restored to order and tranquillity. He ordered every exertion to be made, therefore, to get the ships in readiness to be sent round to Xaragua; but the scarcity of sea-stores, and the difficulty of completing the arrangements for such a voyage in the disordered state of the colony, delayed their departure far beyond the stipulated time. Feeling that he had been compelled to a kind of deception towards the sovereigns, in the certificate of good conduct given to Roldan and his followers, he wrote a letter to them, stating the circumstances under which that certificate had been in a manner wrung from him to save the island from utter confusion and ruin. He represented the real character and conduct of those men; how they had rebelled against his authority; prevented the Indians from paying tribute; pillaged the island; possessed themselves of large quantities of gold, and carried off the daughters of several of the caciques. He advised, therefore, that they should be seized, and their slaves and treasure taken from them, until their conduct could be properly investigated. This letter he intrusted to a confidential person, who was to go in one of the ships.*

The rebels having left the neighborhood, and the affairs of

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

San Domingo being in a state of security, Columbus put his brother Don Diego in temporary command, and departed with the Adelantado on a tour of several months to visit the various stations, and restore the island to order.

The two caravels destined for the use of the rebels sailed from San Domingo for Xaragua about the end of February; but, encountering a violent storm, were obliged to put into one of the harbors of the island, where they were detained until the end of March. One was so disabled as to be compelled to return to San Domingo. Another vessel was dispatched to supply its place, in which the indefatigable Carvajal set sail, to expedite the embarkation of the rebels. He was eleven days in making the voyage, and found the other caravel at Xaragua.

The followers of Roldan had in the meantime changed their minds, and now refused to embark; as usual, they threw all the blame on Columbus, affirming that he had purposely delayed the ships far beyond the stipulated time; that he had sent them in a state not sea-worthy, and short of provisions, with many other charges, artfully founded on circumstances over which they knew he could have no control. Carvajal made a formal protest before a notary who had accompanied him, and finding that the ships were suffering great injury from the teredo or worm, and their provisions failing, he sent them back to San Domingo, and set out on his return by land. Roldan accompanied him a little distance on horseback, evidently disturbed in mind. He feared to return to Spain, yet was shrewd enough to know the insecurity of his present situation at the head of a band of dissolute men, acting in defiance of authority. What tie had he upon their fidelity stronger than the sacred obligations which they had violated?

After riding thoughtfully for some distance, he paused, and requested some private conversation with Carvajal before they parted. They alighted under the shade of a tree. Here Roldan made further professions of the loyalty of his intentions, and finally declared, that if the admiral would once more send him a written security for his person, with the guarantee also of the principal persons about him, he would come to treat with him, and trusted that the whole matter would be arranged on terms satisfactory to both parties. This offer, however, he added, must be kept secret from his followers.

Carvajal, overjoyed at this prospect of a final arrangement, lost no time in conveying the proposition of Roldan to the admiral. The latter immediately forwarded the required passport or security, sealed with the royal seal, accompanied by a letter written in amicable terms, exhorting his quiet obedience to the authority of the sovereigns. Several of the principal persons also, who were with the admiral, wrote, at his request, a letter of security to Roldan, pledging themselves for the safety of himself and his followers during the negotiation, provided they did nothing hostile to the royal authority or its representative.

While Columbus was thus, with unwearied assiduity and loyal zeal, endeavoring to bring the island back to its obedience, he received a reply from Spain, to the earnest representations made by him, in the preceding autumn, of the distracted state of the colony and the outrages of these lawless men, and his prayers for royal countenance and support. The letter was written by his invidious enemy, the Bishop Fonseca, superintendent of Indian affairs. It acknowledged the receipt of his statement of the alleged insurrection of Roldan, but observed that this matter

must be suffered to remain in suspense, as the sovereigns would investigate and remedy it presently.*

This cold reply had a disheartening effect upon Columbus. He saw that his complaints had little weight with the government; he feared that his enemies were prejudicing him with the sovereigns; and he anticipated redoubled insolence on the part of the rebels, when they should discover how little influence he possessed in Spain. Full of zeal, however, for the success of his undertaking, and of fidelity to the interests of the sovereigns, he resolved to spare no personal sacrifice of comfort or dignity in appeasing the troubles of the island. Eager to expedite the negotiation with Roldan, therefore, he sailed in the latter part of August with two caravels to the port of Azua, west of San Domingo, and much nearer to Xaragua. He was accompanied by several of the most important personages of the colony. Roldan repaired thither likewise, with the turbulent Adrian de Moxica, and a number of his band. The concessions already obtained had increased his presumption; and he had, doubtless, received intelligence of the cold manner in which the complaints of the admiral had been received in Spain. He conducted himself more like a conqueror, exacting triumphant terms, than a delinquent seeking to procure pardon by atonement. He came on board of the caravel, and with his usual effrontery, propounded the preliminaries upon which he and his companions were disposed to negotiate.

First, that he should be permitted to send several of his company, to the number of fifteen, to Spain, in the vessels which were at San Domingo. Secondly, that those who remained should have lands granted them, in place of royal pay. Thirdly, that it should

* Herrera, decad. i lib. iii. cap. 16.

be proclaimed, that every thing charged against him and his party had been grounded upon false testimony, and the machinations of persons disaffected to the royal service. Fourthly, that he should be reinstated in his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge.*

These were hard and insolent conditions to commence with, but they were granted. Roldan then went on shore, and communicated them to his companions. At the end of two days the insurgents sent their capitulations, drawn up in form, and couched in arrogant language, including all the stipulations granted at Fort Conception, with those recently demanded by Roldan, and concluding with one, more insolent than all the rest, namely, that if the admiral should fail in the fulfillment of any of these articles, they should have a right to assemble together, and compel his performance of them by force, or by any other means they might think proper.† The conspirators thus sought not merely exculpation of the past, but a pretext for future rebellion.

The mind grows wearied and impatient with recording, and the heart of the generous reader must burn with indignation at perusing, this protracted and ineffectual struggle of a man of the exalted merits and matchless services of Columbus, in the toils of such miscreants. Surrounded by doubt and danger; a foreigner among a jealous people; an unpopular commander in a mutinous island; distrusted and slighted by the government he was seeking to serve; and creating suspicion by his very services; he knew not where to look for faithful advice, efficient aid, or candid judgment. The very ground on which he stood seemed giving way under him, for he was told of seditious symptoms among his own people. Seeing the impunity with which the rebels

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

† Idem. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 38.

rioted in the possession of one of the finest parts of the island, they began to talk among themselves of following their example, of abandoning the standard of the admiral, and seizing upon the province of Higuey, at the eastern extremity of the island, which was said to contain valuable mines of gold.

Thus critically situated, disregarding every consideration of personal pride and dignity, and determined, at any individual sacrifice, to secure the interests of an ungrateful sovereign, Columbus forced himself to sign this most humiliating capitulation. He trusted that afterwards, when he could gain quiet access to the royal ear, he should be able to convince the king and queen that it had been compulsory, and forced from him by the extraordinary difficulties in which he had been placed, and the imminent perils of the colony. Before signing it, however, he inserted a stipulation, that the commands of the sovereigns, of himself, and of the justices appointed by him, should be punctually obeyed.*

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

CHAPTER IV.

GRANTS MADE TO ROLDAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS.—DEPARTURE OF SEVERAL OF THE REBELS FOR SPAIN.

[1499.]

When Roldan resumed his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge, he displayed all the arrogance to be expected from one who had intruded himself into power by profligate means. At the city of San Domingo, he was always surrounded by his faction; communed only with the dissolute and disaffected; and, having all the turbulent and desperate men of the community at his beck, was enabled to intimidate the quiet and loyal by his frowns. He bore an impudent front against the authority even of Columbus himself, discharging from office one Rodrigo Perez, a lieutenant of the admiral, declaring that none but such as he appointed should bear a staff of office in the island.* Columbus had a difficult and painful task in bearing with the insolence of this man, and of the shameless rabble which had returned, under his auspices, to the settlements. He tacitly permitted many abuses; endeavoring by mildness and indulgence to allay the jealousies and prejudices awakened against him, and by various concessions to lure the factious to the performance of their duty. To such

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

of the colonists generally as preferred to remain in the island, he offered a choice of either royal pay or portions of lands, with a number of Indians, some free, others as slaves, to assist in the cultivation. The latter was generally preferred; and grants were made out, in which he endeavoured, as much as possible, to combine the benefit of the individual with the interests of the colony.

Roldan presented a memorial signed by upwards of one hundred of his late followers, demanding grants of lands and licenses to settle, and choosing Xaragua for their place of abode. The admiral feared to trust such a numerous body of factious partisans in so remote a province; he contrived, therefore, to distribute them in various parts of the island; some at Bonao, where their settlement gave origin to the town of that name; others on the bank of the Rio Verde, or Green River, in the Vega; others about six leagues thence, at St. Jago. He assigned to them liberal portions of land, and numerous Indian slaves, taken in the wars. He made an arrangement, also, by which the caciques in their vicinity, instead of paying tribute, should furnish parties of their subjects, free Indians, to assist the colonists in the cultivation of their lands: a kind of feudal service, which was the origin of the repartimientos, or distributions of free Indians among the colonists, afterwards generally adopted, and shamefully abused, throughout the Spanish colonies; a source of intolerable hardships and oppressions to the unhappy natives, and which greatly contributed to exterminate them from the island of Hispaniola.* Columbus considered the island in the light of a conquered country, and arrogated to himself all the rights of a conqueror, in the name of the sovereigns for whom he fought. Of course all

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

his companions in the enterprise were entitled to take part in the acquired territory, and to establish themselves there as feudal lords, reducing the natives to the condition of villains or vassals.* This was an arrangement widely different from his original intention of treating the natives with kindness, as peaceful subjects of the crown. But all his plans had been subverted, and his present measures forced upon him by the exigency of the times and the violence of lawless men. He appointed a captain with an armed band, as a kind of police, with orders to range the provinces; oblige the Indians to pay their tributes; watch over the conduct of the colonists; and check the least appearance of mutiny or insurrection.†

Having sought and obtained such ample provisions for his followers, Roldan was not more modest in making demands for himself. He claimed certain lands in the vicinity of Isabella, as having belonged to him before his rebellion; also a royal farm, called La Esperanza, situated on the Vega, and devoted to the rearing of poultry. These the admiral granted him, with permission to employ, in the cultivation of the farm, the subjects of the cacique whose ears had been cut off by Alonzo de Ojeda in his first military expedition into the Vega. Roldan received also grants of land in Xaragua, and a variety of live stock from the cattle and other animals belonging to the crown. These grants were made to him provisionally, until the pleasure of the sovereigns should be known;‡ for Columbus yet trusted, that when they should understand the manner in which these concessions had been extorted from him, the ringleaders of the rebels

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, lib. vi. § 50. † Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.
‡ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 1°.

would not merely be stripped of their ill-gotten possessions, but receive well merited punishment.

Roldan having now enriched himself beyond his hopes, requested permission of Columbus to visit his lands. This was granted with great reluctance. He immediately departed for the Vega, and stopping at Bonao, his late head-quarters, made Pedro Requelme, one of his most active confederates, alcalde, or judge of the place, with the power of arresting all delinquents, and sending them prisoners to the fortress of Conception, where he reserved to himself the right of sentencing them. This was an assumption of powers not vested in his office, and gave great offence to Columbus. Other circumstances created apprehensions of further troubles from the late insurgents. Pedro Requelme, under pretext of erecting farming buildings for his cattle, began to construct a strong edifice on a hill, capable of being converted into a formidable fortress. This, it was whispered, was done in concert with Roldan, by way of securing a strong-hold in case of need. Being in the neighborhood of the Vega, where so many of their late partisans were settled, it would form a dangerous rallying place for any new sedition. The designs of Requelme were suspected and his proceedings opposed by Pedro de Arana, a loyal and honorable man, who was on the spot. Representations were made by both parties to the admiral, who prohibited Requelme from proceeding with the construction of his edifice.*

Columbus had prepared to return, with his brother Don Bartholomew, to Spain, where he felt that his presence was of the utmost importance to place the late events of the island in a proper light; having found that his letters of explanation were

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 83, 84.

liable to be counteracted by the misrepresentations of malevolent enemies. The island, however, was still in a feverish state. He was not well assured of the fidelity of the late rebels, though so dearly purchased; there was a rumor of a threatened descent into the Vega, by the mountain tribes of Ciguay, to attempt the rescue of their captive cacique Mayobanex, still detained a prisoner in the fortress of Conception. Tidings were brought about the same time from the western parts of the island, that four strange ships had arrived at the coast, under suspicious appearances. These circumstances obliged him to postpone his departure, and held him involved in the affairs of this favorite but fatal island.

The two caravels were dispatched for Spain in the beginning of October, taking such of the colonists as chose to return, and among them a number of Roldan's partisans. Some of these took with them slaves, others carried away the daughters of caciques whom they had beguiled from their families and homes. At these iniquities, no less than at many others which equally grieved his spirit, the admiral was obliged to connive. He was conscious, at the same time, that he was sending home a reinforcement of enemies and false witnesses, to defame his character and traduce his conduct, but he had no alternative. To counteract, as much as possible, their misrepresentations, he sent by the same caravel, the loyal and upright veteran Miguel Ballester, together with Garcia de Barrantés, empowered to attend to his affairs at court, and furnished with the depositions taken relative to the conduct of Roldan and his accomplices.

In his letters to the sovereigns, he entreated them to inquire into the truth of the late transactions. He stated his opinion that his capitulations with the rebels were null and void, for various reasons, viz.—they had been extorted from him by violence, and

at sea, where he did not exercise the office of viceroy—there had been two trials relative to the insurrection, and the insurgents having been condemned as traitors, it was not in the power of the admiral to absolve them from their criminality—the capitulations treated of matters touching the royal revenue, over which he had no control, without the intervention of the proper officers;—lastly, Francisco Roldan and his companions, on leaving Spain, had taken an oath to be faithful to the sovereigns, and to the admiral in their name, which oath they had violated. For these and similar reasons, some just, others rather sophistical, he urged the sovereigns not to consider themselves bound to ratify the compulsory terms ceded to these profligate men, but to inquire into their offences, and treat them accordingly.*

He repeated the request made in a former letter, that a learned judge might be sent out to administer the laws in the island, since he himself had been charged with rigor, although conscious of having always observed a guarded clemency. He requested also that discreet persons should be sent out to form a council, and others for certain fiscal employments, entreating, however, that their powers should be so limited and defined, as not to interfere with his dignity and privileges. He bore strongly on this point; as his prerogatives on former occasions had been grievously invaded. It appeared to him, he said, that princes ought to show much confidence in their governors; for without the royal favor to give them strength and consequence, every thing went to ruin under their command; a sound maxim, forced from the admiral by his recent experience, in which much of his own perplexities, and the triumph of the rebels, had been caused by the distrust of the crown, and its inattention to his remonstrances.

* Herrera decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

Finding age and infirmity creeping upon him, and his health much impaired by his last voyage, he began to think of his son Diego, as an active coadjutor; who, being destined as his successor, might gain experience under his eye, for the future discharge of his high duties. Diego, though still serving as a page at the court, was grown to man's estate, and capable of entering into the important concerns of life. Columbus entreated, therefore, that he might be sent out to assist him, as he felt himself infirm in health and broken in constitution, and less capable of exertion than formerly.*

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL OF OJEDA WITH A SQUADRON AT THE WESTERN PART OF THE ISLAND.—ROLDAN SENT TO MEET HIM.

[1499.]

Among the causes which induced Columbus to postpone his departure for Spain, has been mentioned the arrival of four ships at the western part of the island. These had anchored on the 5th of September in a harbor a little below Jacquemel, apparently with the design of cutting dye-woods, which abound in that neighborhood, and of carrying off the natives for slaves. Further reports informed him that they were commanded by Alonzo de Ojeda, the same hot-headed and bold-hearted cavalier who had distinguished himself on various occasions in the previous voyages of discovery, and particularly in the capture of the cacique Caonabo. Knowing the daring and adventurous spirit of this man, Columbus felt much disturbed at his visiting the island in this clandestine manner, on what appeared to be little better than a freebooting expedition. To call him to account, and oppose his aggressions, required an agent of spirit and address. No one seemed better fitted for the purpose than Roldan. He was as daring as Ojeda, and of a more crafty character. An expedition of the kind would occupy the attention of himself and his partisans,

and divert them from any schemes of mischief. The large concessions recently made to them would, he trusted, secure their present fidelity, rendering it more profitable for them to be loyal than rebellious.

Roldan readily undertook the enterprise. He had nothing further to gain by sedition, and was anxious to secure his ill-gotten possessions and atone for past offences by public services. He was vain as well as active, and took a pride in acquitting himself well in an expedition which called for both courage and shrewdness. Departing from San Domingo with two caravels, he arrived on the 29th of September within two leagues of the harbor where the ships of Ojeda were anchored. Here he landed with five-and-twenty resolute followers, well armed, and accustomed to range the forests. He sent five scouts to reconnoitre. They brought word that Ojeda was several leagues distant from his ships, with only fifteen men, employed in making cassava bread in an Indian village. Roldan threw himself between them and the ships, thinking to take them by surprise. They were apprised, however, of his approach by the Indians, with whom the very name of Roldan inspired terror, from his late excesses in Xaragua. Ojeda saw his danger; he supposed Roldan had been sent in pursuit of him, and he found himself cut off from his ships. With his usual intrepidity he immediately presented himself before Roldan, attended merely by half a dozen followers. The latter craftily began by conversing on general topics. He then inquired into his motives for landing on the island, particularly on that remote and lonely part, without first reporting his arrival to the admiral. Ojeda replied, that he had been on a voyage of discovery, and had put in there in distress, to repair his ships and procure provisions. Roldan then demanded, in the

name of the government, a sight of the license under which he sailed. Ojeda, who knew the resolute character of the man he had to deal with, restrained his natural impetuosity, and replied that his papers were on board of his ship. He declared his intention, on departing thence, to go to San Domingo, and pay his homage to the admiral, having many things to tell him which were for his private ear alone. He intimated to Roldan that the admiral was in complete disgrace at court; that there was a talk of taking from him his command, and that the queen, his patroness, was ill beyond all hopes of recovery. This intimation, it is presumed, was referred to by Roldan in his dispatches to the admiral, wherein he mentioned that certain things had been communicated to him by Ojeda, which he did not think it safe to confide to a letter.

Roldan now repaired to the ships. He found several persons on board with whom he was acquainted, and who had already been in Hispaniola. They confirmed the truth of what Ojeda had said, and showed a license signed by the Bishop of Fonseca, as superintendent of the affairs of the Indias, authorizing him to sail on a voyage of discovery.*

It appeared, from the report of Ojeda and his followers, that the glowing accounts sent home by Columbus of his late discoveries on the coast of Paria, his magnificent speculations with respect to the riches of the newly-found country, and the specimen of pearls transmitted to the sovereigns, had inflamed the cupidity of various adventurers. Ojeda happened to be at that time in Spain. He was a favorite of the Bishop of Fonseca, and obtained a sight of the letter written by the admiral to the sovereigns, and the charts and maps of his route by which it was

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 3.

accompanied. Ojeda knew Columbus to be embarrassed by the seditions of Hispaniola; he found, by his conversations with Fonseca and other of the admiral's enemies, that strong doubts and jealousies existed in the mind of the king with respect to his conduct, and that his approaching downfall was confidently predicted. The idea of taking advantage of these circumstances struck Ojeda, and, by a private enterprise, he hoped to be the first in gathering the wealth of these newly-discovered regions. He communicated his project to his patron, Fonseca. The latter was but too ready for any thing that might defeat the plans and obscure the glory of Columbus; and it may be added that he always shewed himself more disposed to patronize mercenary adventurers than upright and high-minded men. He granted Ojeda every facility; furnishing him with copies of the papers and charts of Columbus, by which to direct himself in his course, and a letter of license signed with his own name, though not with that of the sovereigns. In this, it was stipulated that he should not touch at any land belonging to the King of Portugal, nor any that had been discovered by Columbus prior to 1495. The last provision shows the perfidious artifice of Fonseca, as it left Paria and the Pearl Islands free to the visits of Ojeda, they having been discovered by Columbus subsequent to the designated year. The ships were to be fitted out at the charges of the adventurers, and a certain proportion of the products of the voyage were to be rendered to the crown.

Under this license Ojeda fitted out four ships at Seville, assisted by many eager and wealthy speculators. Among the number was the celebrated Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant, well acquainted with geography and navigation. The principal pilot of the expedition was Juan de la Cosa, a mariner of great

repute, a disciple of the admiral, whom he had accompanied in his first voyage of discovery, and in that along the southern coast of Cuba, and round the island of Jamaica. There were several also of the mariners, and Bartholomew Roldan, a distinguished pilot, who had been with Columbus in his voyage to Paria.* Such was the expedition which, by a singular train of circumstances, eventually gave the name of this Florentine merchant, Amerigo Vespucci, to the whole of the New World.

This expedition had sailed in May, 1499. The adventurers had arrived on the southern continent, and ranged along its coast, from two hundred leagues east of the Oronoco, to the Gulf of Paria. Guided by the charts of Columbus, they had passed through this gulf, and through the Boca del Dragon, and had kept along westward to Cape de la Vela, visiting the island of Margarita and the adjacent continent, and discovering the Gulf of Venezuela. They had subsequently touched at the Caribbee Islands, where they had fought with the fierce natives, and made many captives, with the intention of selling them in the slave-markets of Spain. Thence, being in need of supplies, they had sailed to Hispaniola, having performed the most extensive voyage hitherto made along the shores of the New World.†

Having collected all the information that he could obtain concerning these voyagers, their adventures and designs, and trusting to the declaration of Ojeda, that he should proceed forthwith to present himself to the admiral, Roldan returned to San Domingo to render a report of his mission.

* Las Casas.

† Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 4. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part in MS. unpublished.

CHAPTER VI.

MANŒUVRES OF ROLDAN AND OJEDA.

[1500.]

When intelligence was brought to Columbus of the nature of the expedition of Ojeda, and the license under which he sailed, he considered himself deeply aggrieved, it being a direct infraction of his most important prerogatives, and sanctioned by authority which ought to have held them sacred. He awaited patiently, however, the promised visit of Alonzo de Ojeda to obtain fuller explanations. Nothing was further from the intention of that roving commander than to keep such promise: he had made it merely to elude the vigilance of Roldan. As soon as he had refitted his vessels and obtained a supply of provisions, he sailed round to the coast of Xaragua, where he arrived in February. Here he was well received by the Spaniards resident in that province, who supplied all his wants. Among them were many of the late comrades of Roldan; loose, random characters, impatient of order and restraint, and burning with animosity against the admiral, for having again brought them under the wholesome authority of the laws.

Knowing the rash and fearless character of Ojeda, and finding that there were jealousies between him and the admiral, they

hailed him as a new leader, come to redress their fancied grievances, in place of Roldan, whom they considered as having deserted them. They made clamorous complaints to Ojeda of the injustice of the admiral, whom they charged with withholding from them the arrears of their pay.

Ojeda was a hot-headed man, with somewhat of a vaunting spirit, and immediately set himself up for a redresser of grievances. It is said also, that he gave himself out as authorized by government, in conjunction with Carvajal, to act as counselors, or rather supervisors of the admiral; and that one of the first measures they were to take, was to enforce the payment of all salaries due to the servants of the crown.* It is questionable, however, whether Ojeda made any pretension of the kind, which could so readily be disproved, and would have tended to disgrace him with the government. It is probable that he was encouraged in his intermeddling, chiefly by his knowledge of the tottering state of the admiral's favor at court, and of his own security in the powerful protection of Fonseca. He may have imbibed also the opinion, diligently fostered by those with whom he had chiefly communicated in Spain, just before his departure, that these people had been driven to extremities by the oppression of the admiral and his brothers. Some feeling of generosity, therefore, may have mingled with his usual love of action and enterprise, when he proposed to redress all their wrongs, put himself at their head, march at once to San Domingo, and oblige the admiral to pay them on the spot, or expel him from the island.

The proposition of Ojeda was received with acclamations of transport by some of the rebels; others made objections. Quarrels arose: a ruffianly scene of violence and brawl ensued, in

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.

which several were killed and wounded on both sides; but the party for the expedition to San Domingo remained triumphant.

Fortunately for the peace and safety of the admiral, Roldan arrived in the neighborhood, just at this critical juncture, attended by a crew of resolute fellows. He had been dispatched by Columbus to watch the movements of Ojeda, on hearing of his arrival on the coast of Xaragua. Apprised of the violent scenes which were taking place, Roldan, when on the way, sent to his old confederate Diego de Escobar, to follow him with all the trusty force he could collect. They reached Xaragua within a day of each other. An instance of the bad faith usual between bad men was now evinced. The former partisans of Roldan, finding him earnest in his intention of serving the government, and that there was no hope of engaging him in their new sedition, sought to waylay and destroy him on his march, but his vigilance and celerity prevented them.*

Ojeda, when he heard of the approach of Roldan and Escobar, retired on board of his ships. Though of a daring spirit, he had no inclination, in the present instance, to come to blows, where there was a certainty of desperate fighting, and no gain; and where he must raise his arm against government. Roldan now issued such remonstrances as had often been ineffectually addressed to himself. He wrote to Ojeda, reasoning with him on his conduct, and the confusion he was producing in the island, and inviting him on shore to an amicable arrangement of all alleged grievances. Ojeda, knowing the crafty, violent character of Roldan, disregarded his repeated messages, and refused to venture within his power. He even seized one of his messengers, Diego de Truxillo, and landing suddenly at Xaragua, carried off another

* Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

of his followers, named Toribio de Lenares; both of whom he detained in irons, on board of his vessel, as hostages for a certain Juan Pintor, a one-armed sailor, who had deserted, threatening to hang them if the deserter was not given up.*

Various manœuvres took place between these two well-matched opponents; each wary of the address and prowess of the other. Ojeda made sail, and stood twelve leagues to the northward, to the province of Cahay, one of the most beautiful and fertile parts of the country, and inhabited by a kind and gentle people. Here he landed with forty men, seizing upon whatever he could find of the provisions of the natives. Roldan and Escobar followed along shore, and were soon at his heels. Roldan then dispatched Escobar in a light canoe, paddled swiftly by Indians, who approaching within hail of the ship, informed Ojeda that, since he would not trust himself on shore, Roldan would come and confer with him on board, if he would send a boat for him.

Ojeda now thought himself secure of his enemy; he immediately dispatched a boat within a short distance of the shore, where the crew lay on their oars, requiring Roldan to come to them. "How many may accompany me?" demanded the latter: "Only five or six," was the reply. Upon this Diego de Escobar and four others waded to the boat. The crew refused to admit more. Roldan then ordered one man to carry him to the barge, and another to walk by his side, and assist him. By this stratagem, his party was eight strong. The instant he entered the boat, he ordered the oarsmen to row to shore. On their refusing, he and his companions attacked them sword in hand, wounded

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 169, MS.

several, and made all prisoners, excepting an Indian archer, who, plunging under the water, escaped by swimming.

This was an important triumph for Roldan. Ojeda, anxious for the recovery of his boat, which was indispensable for the service of the ship, now made overtures of peace. He approached the shore in his remaining boat of small size, taking with him his principal pilot, an arquebusier, and four oarsmen. Roldan entered the boat he had just captured, with seven rowers and fifteen fighting men, causing fifteen others to be ready on shore to embark in a large canoe, in case of need. A characteristic interview took place between these doughty antagonists, each keeping warily on his guard. Their conference was carried on at a distance. Ojeda justified his hostile movements by alleging that Roldan had come with an armed force to seize him. This the latter positively denied, promising him the most amicable reception from the admiral, in case he would repair to San Domingo. An arrangement was at length effected; the boat was restored, and mutual restitution of the men took place, with the exception of Juan Pintor, the one-armed deserter, who had absconded; and on the following day, Ojeda, according to agreement, set sail to leave the island, threatening however to return at a future time with more ships and men.*

Roldan waited in the neighborhood, doubting the truth of his departure. In the course of a few days, word was brought that Ojeda had landed on a distant part of the coast. He immediately pursued him with eighty men, in canoes, sending scouts by land. Before he arrived at the place, Ojeda had again made sail, and Roldan saw and heard no more of him. Las Casas asserts,

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

however, that Ojeda departed either to some remote district of Hispaniola, or to the island of Porto Rico, where he made up what he called his *Cavalgada*, or drove of slaves; carrying off numbers of the unhappy natives, whom he sold in the slave-market of Cadiz.*

* Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 169.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSPIRACY OF GUEVARA AND MOXICA.

[1500.]

When men have been accustomed to act falsely, they take great merit to themselves for an exertion of common honesty. The followers of Roldan were loud in trumpeting forth their unwonted loyalty, and the great services they had rendered to government in driving Ojeda from the island. Like all reformed knaves, they expected that their good conduct would be amply rewarded. Looking upon their leader as having every thing in his gift, and being well pleased with the delightful province of Cahay, they requested him to share the land among them, that they might settle there. Roldan would have had no hesitation in granting their request, had it been made during his freebooting career; but he was now anxious to establish a character for adherence to the laws. He declined, therefore, acceding to their wishes, until sanctioned by the admiral. Knowing, however, that he had fostered a spirit among these men which it was dangerous to contradict, and that their rapacity, by long indulgence, did not admit of delay, he shared among them certain lands of his own, in the territory of his ancient host Behechio, cacique of Xaragua. He then wrote to the admiral for permission to return to San Domingo, and received a letter in reply, giving him many thanks and com

mendations for the diligence and address which he had manifested, but requesting him to remain for a time in Xaragua, lest Ojeda should be yet hovering about the coast, and disposed to make another descent in that province.

The troubles of the island were not yet at an end, but were destined again to break forth, and from somewhat of a romantic cause. There arrived about this time, at Xaragua, a young cavalier of noble family, named Don Hernando de Guevara. He possessed an agreeable person and winning manners, but was headstrong in his passions and dissolute in his principles. He was cousin to Adrian de Moxica, one of the most active ring leaders in the late rebellion of Roldan, and had conducted himself with such licentiousness at San Domingo, that Columbus had banished him from the island. There being no other opportunity of embarking, he had been sent to Xaragua, to return to Spain in one of the ships of Ojeda, but arrived after their departure. Roldan received him favorably, on account of his old comrade, Adrian de Moxica, and permitted him to choose some place of residence until further orders concerning him should arrive from the admiral. He chose the province of Cahay, at the place where Roldan had captured the boat of Ojeda. It was a delightful part of that beautiful coast; but the reason why Guevara chose it, was the vicinity to Xaragua. While at the latter place, in consequence of the indulgence of Roldan, he was favorably received at the house of Anacaona, the widow of Caonabo, and sister of the cacique Behechio. That remarkable woman still retained her partiality to the Spaniards, notwithstanding the disgraceful scenes which had passed before her eyes; and the native dignity of her character had commanded the respect even of the dissolute rabble which infested her province. By her late hus-

band, the cacique Caonabo, she had a daughter named Higuenamota, just grown up, and greatly admired for her beauty. Guevara, being often in company with her, a mutual attachment ensued. It was to be near her that he chose Cahay as a residence, at a place where his cousin Adrian de Moxica kept a number of dogs and hawks, to be employed in the chase. Guevara delayed his departure. Roldan discovered the reason, and warned him to desist from his pretensions and leave the province. Las Casas intimates that Roldan was himself attached to the young Indian beauty, and jealous of her preference of his rival, Anacaona, the mother, pleased with the gallant appearance and ingratiating manners of the youthful cavalier, favored his attachment; especially as he sought her daughter in marriage. Notwithstanding the orders of Roldan, Guevara still lingered in Xaragua, in the house of Anacaona; and sending for a priest, desired him to baptize his intended bride.

Hearing of this, Roldan sent for Guevara, and rebuked him sharply for remaining at Xaragua, and attempting to deceive a person of the importance of Anacaona, by ensnaring the affections of her daughter. Guevara avowed the strength of his passion, and his correct intentions, and entreated permission to remain. Roldan was inflexible. He alleged that some evil construction might be put on his conduct by the admiral; but it is probable his true motive was a desire to send away a rival, who interfered with his own amorous designs. Guevara obeyed; but had scarce been three days at Cahay, when unable to remain longer absent from the object of his passion, he returned to Xaragua, accompanied by four or five friends, and concealed himself in the dwelling of Anacaona. Roldan, who was at that time confined by a malady in his eyes, being apprised of his return, sent

orders for him to depart instantly to Cahay. The young cavalier assumed a tone of defiance. He warned Roldan not to make foes when he had such great need of friends; for, to his certain knowledge, the admiral intended to behead him. Upon this, Roldan commanded him to quit that part of the island, and repair to San Domingo, to present himself before the admiral. The thoughts of being banished entirely from the vicinity of his Indian beauty, checked the vehemence of the youth. He changed his tone of haughty defiance into one of humble supplication; and Roldan, appeased by this submission, permitted him to remain for the present in the neighborhood.

Roldan had instilled willfulness and violence into the hearts of his late followers, and now was doomed to experience the effects. Guevara, incensed at his opposition to his passion, meditated revenge. He soon made a party among the old comrades of Roldan, who detested, as a magistrate, the man they had idolized as a leader. It was concerted to rise suddenly upon him, and either to kill him or put out his eyes. Roldan was apprised of the plot, and proceeded with his usual promptness. Guevara was seized in the dwelling of Anacaona, in the presence of his intended bride; seven of his accomplices were likewise arrested. Roldan immediately sent an account of the affair to the admiral, professing, at present, to do nothing without his authority, and declaring himself not competent to judge impartially in the case. Columbus, who was at that time at Fort Conception, in the Vega, ordered the prisoner to be conducted to the fortress of San Domingo.

The vigorous measures of Roldan against his old comrades, produced commotions in the island. When Adrian de Moxica heard that his cousin Guevara was a prisoner, and that, too, by

command of his former confederate, he was highly exasperated, and resolved on vengeance. Hastening to Bonao, the old haunt of rebellion, he obtained the co-operation of Pedro Requelme, the recently appointed alcalde. They went round among their late companions in rebellion, who had received lands and settled in various parts of the Vega, working upon their ready passions, and enlisting their feelings in the cause of an old comrade. These men seem to have had an irresistible propensity to sedition. Guevara was a favorite with them all; the charms of the Indian beauty had probably their influence; and the conduct of Roldan was pronounced a tyrannical interference, to prevent a marriage agreeable to all parties, and beneficial to the colony. There is no being so odious to his former associates as a reformed robber, or a rebel, enlisted in the service of justice. The old scenes of faction were renewed; the weapons which had scarce been hung up from the recent rebellions, were again snatched down from the walls, and rash preparations were made for action. Moxica soon saw a body of daring and reckless men ready, with horse and weapon, to follow him on any desperate enterprise. Blinded by the impunity which had attended their former outrages, he now threatened acts of greater atrocity, meditating, not merely the rescue of his cousin, but the death of Roldan and the admiral.

Columbus was at Fort Conception, with an inconsiderable force, when this dangerous plot was concerted in his very neighborhood. Not dreaming of any further hostilities from men on whom he had lavished favors, he would doubtless have fallen into their power, had not intelligence been brought him of the plot by a deserter from the conspirators. He saw at a glance the perils by which he was surrounded, and the storm about to burst upon the island. It was no longer a time for lenient measures; he

determined to strike a blow which should crush the very head of rebellion.

Taking with him but six or seven trusty servants, and three esquires, all well armed, he set out in the night for the place where the ringleaders were quartered. Confiding probably in the secrecy of their plot, and the late passiveness of the admiral, they appear to have been perfectly unguarded. Columbus came upon them by surprise, seized Moxica and several of his principal confederates, and bore them off to Fort Conception. The moment was critical; the Vega was ripe for a revolt; he had the fomenter of the conspiracy in his power, and an example was called for, that should strike terror into the factious. He ordered Moxica to be hanged on the top of the fortress. The latter entreated to be allowed to confess himself previous to execution. A priest was summoned. The miserable Moxica, who had been so arrogant in rebellion, lost all courage at the near approach of death. He delayed to confess, beginning and pausing, and recommencing, and again hesitating, as if he hoped, by whiling away time, to give a chance for rescue. Instead of confessing his own sins, he accused others of criminality, who were known to be innocent; until Columbus, incensed at this falsehood and treachery, and losing all patience, in his mingled indignation and scorn, ordered the dastard wretch to be swung off from the battlements.*

This sudden act of severity was promptly followed up. Several of the accomplices of Moxica were condemned to death and thrown in irons to await their fate. Before the conspirators had time to recover from their astonishment, Pedro Requelme was taken, with several of his compeers, in his ruffian den at Bonao, and conveyed to the fortress of San Domingo; where was also

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 5.

confined the original mover of this second rebellion, Hernando de Guevara, the lover of the young Indian princess. These unexpected acts of rigor, proceeding from a quarter which had been long so lenient, had the desired effect. The conspirators fled for the most part to Xaragua, their old and favorite retreat. They were not suffered to congregate their again, and concert new seditions. The Adelantado, seconded by Roldan, pursued them with his characteristic rapidity of movement and vigor of arm. It has been said that he carried a priest with him, in order that, as he arrested delinquents, they might be confessed and hanged upon the spot; but the more probable account is that he transmitted them prisoners to San Domingo. He had seventeen of them at one time confined in one common dungeon, awaiting their trial, while he continued in indefatigable pursuit of the remainder.*

These were prompt and severe measures; but when we consider how long Columbus had borne with these men; how much he had ceded and sacrificed to them; how he had been interrupted in all his great undertakings, and the welfare of the colony destroyed by their contemptible and seditious brawls; how they had abused his lenity, defied his authority, and at length attempted his life,—we cannot wonder that he should at last let fall the sword of justice, which he had hitherto held suspended.

The power of faction was now completely subdued; and the good effects of the various measures taken by Columbus, since his last arrival, for the benefit of the island, began to appear. The Indians, seeing the inefficacy of resistance, submitted to the yoke. Many gave signs of civilization, having, in some instances, adopted clothing and embraced Christianity. Assisted by their

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 170, MS. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv cap. 7.

labors the Spaniards now cultivated their lands diligently, and there was every appearance of settled and regular prosperity.

Columbus considered all this happy change as brought about by the especial intervention of heaven. In a letter to Doña Juana de la Torre, a lady of distinction, aya or nurse of Prince Juan, he gives an instance of those visionary fancies to which he was subject in times of illness and anxiety. In the preceding winter, he says, about the festival of Christmas, when menaced by Indian war and domestic rebellion, when distrustful of those around him and apprehensive of disgrace at court, he sank for a time into complete despondency. In this hour of gloom, when abandoned to despair, he heard in the night a voice addressing him in words of comfort, "Oh man of little faith! why art thou cast down? Fear nothing, I will provide for thee. The seven years of the term of gold are not expired; in that, and in all other things, I will take care of thee."

The seven years term of gold here mentioned, alludes to a vow made by Columbus on discovering the New World, and recorded by him in a letter to the sovereigns, that within seven years he would furnish, from the profits of his discoveries, fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse, for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre, and an additional force of like amount, within five years afterwards.

The comforting assurance given him by the voice was corroborated, he says, that very day, by intelligence received of the discovery of a large tract of country rich in mines.* This imaginary promise of divine aid thus mysteriously given, appeared to him at present in still greater progress of fulfillment. The

* Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.

troubles and dangers of the island had been succeeded by tranquillity. He now anticipated the prosperous prosecution of his favorite enterprise, so long interrupted,—the exploring of the regions of Paria, and the establishment of a fishery in the Gulf of Pearls. How illusive were his hopes! At this moment events were maturing which were to overwhelm him with distress, strip him of his honors, and render him comparatively a wreck for the remainder of his days!

BOOK XIII.

CHAPTER I

REPRESENTATIONS AT COURT AGAINST COLUMBUS.—BOBADILLA EMPOWERED TO EXAMINE INTO HIS CONDUCT.

[1500.]

WHILE Columbus was involved in a series of difficulties in the factious island of Hispaniola, his enemies were but too successful in undermining his reputation in the court of Spain. The report brought by Ojeda of his anticipated disgrace was not entirely unfounded; the event was considered near at hand, and every perfidious exertion was made to accelerate it. Every vessel from the New World came freighted with complaints, representing Columbus and his brothers as new men, unaccustomed to command, inflated by their sudden rise from obscurity; arrogant and insulting towards men of birth and lofty spirit; oppressive of the common people, and cruel in their treatment of the natives. The insidious and illiberal insinuation was continually urged, that they were foreigners, who could have no interest in the glory of Spain, or the prosperity of Spaniards; and contemptible as this plea may seem, it had a powerful effect. Columbus was even accused of a design to cast off all allegiance to Spain, and either make

himself sovereign of the countries he had discovered, or yield them into the hands of some other power: a slander which, however extravagant, was calculated to startle the jealous mind of Ferdinand.

It is true, that by every ship Columbus likewise sent home statements, written with the frankness and energy of truth, setting forth the real cause and nature of the distractions of the island, and pointing out and imploring remedies, which, if properly applied, might have been efficacious. His letters, however, arriving at distant intervals, made but single and transient impressions on the royal mind, which were speedily effaced by the influence of daily and active misrepresentation. His enemies at court, having continual access to the sovereigns, were enabled to place every thing urged against him in the strongest point of view, while they secretly neutralized the force of his vindications. They used a plausible logic to prove either bad management or bad faith on his part. There was an incessant drain upon the mother country for the support of the colony. Was this compatible with the extravagant pictures he had drawn of the wealth of the island, and its golden mountains, in which he had pretended to find the Ophir of ancient days, the source of all the riches of Solomon? They inferred that he had either deceived the sovereigns by designing exaggerations, or grossly wronged them by malpractices, or was totally incapable of the duties of government.

The disappointment of Ferdinand, in finding his newly-discovered possessions a source of expense instead of profit, was known to press sorely on his mind. The wars, dictated by his ambition, had straitened his resources, and involved him in perplexities. He had looked with confidence to the New World for relief, and for ample means to pursue his triumphs; and grew

impatient at the repeated demands which it occasioned on his scanty treasury. For the purpose of irritating his feelings and heightening his resentment, every disappointed and repining man who returned from the colony was encouraged, by the hostile faction, to put in claims for pay withheld by Columbus, or losses sustained in his service. This was especially the case with the disorderly ruffians shipped off to free the island from sedition. Finding their way to the court at Granada, they followed the king when he rode out, filling the air with their complaints, and clamoring for their pay. At one time, about fifty of these vagabonds found their way into the inner court of the Alhambra, under the royal apartments; holding up bunches of grapes, as the meagre diet left them by their poverty, and railing aloud at the deceits of Columbus, and the cruel neglect of government. The two sons of Columbus, who were pages to the queen, happening to pass by, they followed them with imprecations, exclaiming, "There go the sons of the admiral, the whelps of him who discovered the land of vanity and delusion, the grave of Spanish hidalgos."*

The incessant repetition of falsehood will gradually wear its way into the most candid mind. Isabella herself began to entertain doubts respecting the conduct of Columbus. Where there was such universal and incessant complaint, it seemed reasonable to conclude that there must exist some fault. If Columbus and his brothers were upright, they might be injudicious; and, in government, mischief is oftener produced through error of judgment, than iniquity of design. The letters written by Columbus himself presented a lamentable picture of the confusion of the island. Might not this arise from the weakness and incapacity of the rulers? Even granting that the prevalent abuses arose in a great

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 85.

measure from the enmity of the people to the admiral and his brothers, and their prejudices against them as foreigners, was it safe to intrust so important and distant a command to persons so unpopular with the community?

These considerations had much weight in the candid mind of Isabella, but they were all-powerful with the cautious and jealous Ferdinand. He had never regarded Columbus with real cordiality; and ever since he had ascertained the importance of his discoveries, had regretted the extensive powers vested in his hands. The excessive clamors which had arisen during the brief administration of the Adelantado, and the breaking out of the faction of Roldan, at length determined the king to send out some person of consequence and ability, to investigate the affairs of the colony, and, if necessary for its safety, to take upon himself the command. This important and critical measure it appears had been decided upon, and the papers and powers actually drawn out, in the spring of 1499. It was not carried into effect, however, until the following year. Various reasons have been assigned for this delay The important services rendered by Columbus in the discovery of Paria and the Pearl Islands, may have had some effect on the royal mind. The necessity of fitting out an armament just at that moment, to co-operate with the Venetians against the Turks; the menacing movements of the new king of France, Louis XII; the rebellion of the Moors of the Alpuxarra mountains in the lately conquered kingdom of Granada; all these have been alleged as reasons for postponing a measure which called for much consideration, and might have important effects upon the newly-discovered possessions.* The most probable reason, however, was the strong disinclination of Isabella to take so harsh a step against a man for

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

whom she entertained such ardent gratitude and high admiration.

At length the arrival of the ships with the late followers of Roldan, according to their capitulation, brought matters to a crisis. It is true, that Ballester and Barrantes came in these ships, to place the affairs of the island in a proper light; but they brought out a host of witnesses in favor of Roldan, and letters written by himself and his confederates, attributing all their late conduct to the tyranny of Columbus and his brothers. Unfortunately, the testimony of the rebels had the greatest weight with Ferdinand; and there was a circumstance in the case which suspended for a time the friendship of Isabella, hitherto the greatest dependence of Columbus.

Having a maternal interest in the welfare of the natives, the queen had been repeatedly offended by what appeared to her pertinacity on the part of Columbus, in continuing to make slaves of those taken in warfare, in contradiction to her known wishes. The same ships which brought home the companions of Roldan, brought likewise a great number of slaves. Some, Columbus had been obliged to grant to these men by the articles of capitulation; others they had brought away clandestinely. Among them were several daughters of caciques, seduced away from their families and their native island by these profligates. Some of these were in a state of pregnancy, others had new-born infants. The gifts and transfers of these unhappy beings were all ascribed to the will of Columbus, and represented to Isabella in the darkest colors. Her sensibility as a woman, and her dignity as a queen, were instantly in arms. "What power," exclaimed she indignantly, "has the admiral to give away my vassals?"* Determined, by one decided and peremptory act, to show her abhorrence of

* Las Casas, lib. i.

these outrages upon humanity, she ordered all the Indians to be restored to their country and friends. Nay more, her measure was retrospective. She commanded that those formerly sent to Spain by the admiral, should be sought out, and sent back to Hispaniola. Unfortunately for Columbus, at this very juncture, in one of his letters, he advised the continuance of Indian slavery for some time longer, as a measure important for the welfare of the colony. This contributed to heighten the indignation of Isabella, and induced her no longer to oppose the sending out of a commission to investigate his conduct, and, if necessary, to supersede him in command.

Ferdinand was exceedingly embarrassed in appointing this commission, between his sense of what was due to the character and services of Columbus, and his anxiety to retract with delicacy the powers vested in him. A pretext at length was furnished by the recent request of the admiral that a person of talents and probity, learned in the law, might be sent out to act as chief judge; and that an impartial umpire might be appointed, to decide in the affair between himself and Roldan. Ferdinand proposed to consult his wishes, but to unite those two officers in one; and as the person he appointed would have to decide in matters touching the highest functions of the admiral and his brothers, he was empowered, should he find them culpable, to supersede them in the government; a singular mode of insuring partiality!

The person chosen for this momentous and delicate office was Don Francisco de Bobadilla, an officer of the royal household, and a commander of the military and religious order of Calatrava. Oviedo pronounces him a very honest and religious man;* but

* Oviedo, Cronica, lib. iii. cap. 6.

he is represented by others, and his actions corroborate the description, as needy, passionate, and ambitious; three powerful objections to his exercising the rights of judicature in a case requiring the utmost patience, candor, and circumspection, and where the judge was to derive wealth and power from the conviction of one of the parties.

The authority vested in Bobadilla is defined in letters from the sovereigns still extant, and which deserve to be noticed chronologically; for the royal intentions appear to have varied with times and circumstances. The first was dated on the 21st of March, 1499, and mentions the complaint of the admiral, that an alcalde, and certain other persons, had risen in rebellion against him. "Wherefore," adds the letter, "we order you to inform yourself of the truth of the foregoing; to ascertain who and what persons they were who rose against the said admiral and our magistracy, and for what cause; and what robberies and other injuries they have committed; and furthermore, to extend your inquiries to all other matters relating to the premises; and the information obtained, and the truth known, whomsoever you find culpable, *arrest their persons, and sequestrate their effects;* and thus taken, proceed against them and the absent, both civilly and criminally, and impose and inflict such fines and punishments as you may think fit.' To carry this into effect, Bobadilla was authorized, in case of necessity, to call in the assistance of the admiral, and of all other persons in authority.

The powers here given are manifestly directed merely against the rebels, and in consequence of the complaints of Columbus. Another letter, dated on the 21st of May, two months subsequently, is of quite different purport. It makes no mention of Columbus, but is addressed to the various functionaries and men

of property of the islands and Terra Firma, informing them of the appointment of Bobadilla to the government, with full civil and criminal jurisdiction. Among the powers specified, is the following:—"It is our will, that if the said commander, Francisco de Bobadilla, should think it necessary for our service, and the purposes of justice, that any cavaliers, or other persons who are at present in those islands, or may arrive there, should leave them, and not return and reside in them, and that they should come and present themselves before us, he may command it in our name, and oblige them to depart; and whomsoever he thus commands, we hereby order, that immediately, without waiting to inquire or consult us, or to receive from us any other letter or command, and without interposing appeal or supplication, they obey whatever he shall say and order, under the penalties which he shall impose on our part," &c. &c.

Another letter, dated likewise on the 21st of May, in which Columbus is styled simply "admiral of the ocean sea," orders him and his brothers to surrender the fortress, ships, houses, arms, ammunition, cattle, and all other royal property, into the hands of Bobadilla, as governor, under penalty of incurring the punishments to which those subject themselves who refuse to surrender fortresses and other trusts, when commanded by their sovereigns.

A fourth letter, dated on the 26th of May, and addressed to Columbus, simply by the title of admiral, is a mere letter of credence, ordering him to give faith and obedience to whatever Bobadilla should impart.

The second and third of these letters were evidently provisional, and only to be produced, if, on examination, there should appear such delinquency on the part of Columbus and his brothers as to warrant their being divested of command.

This heavy blow, as has been shown, remained suspended for a year; yet, that it was whispered about, and triumphantly anticipated by the enemies of Columbus, is evident from the assertions of Ojeda, who sailed from Spain about the time of the signature of those letters, and had intimate communications with Bishop Fonseca, who was considered instrumental in producing this measure. The very license granted by the bishop to Ojeda to sail on a voyage of discovery in contravention of the prerogatives of the admiral, has the air of being given on a presumption of his speedy downfall; and the same presumption, as has already been observed, must have encouraged Ojeda in his turbulent conduct at Xaragua.

At length the long-projected measure was carried into effect. Bobadilla set sail for San Domingo about the middle of July, 1500, with two caravels, in which were twenty-five men, enlisted for a year, to serve as a kind of guard. There were six friars likewise, who had charge of a number of Indians sent back to their country. Besides the letters patent, Bobadilla was authorized, by royal order, to ascertain and discharge all arrears of pay due to persons in the service of the crown; and to oblige the admiral to pay what was due on his part, "so that those people might receive what was owing to them, and there might be no more complaints." In addition to all these powers, Bobadilla was furnished with many blank letters signed by the sovereigns, to be filled up by him in such manner, and directed to such persons, as he might think advisable, in relation to the mission with which he was intrusted.*

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 7.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL OF BOBADILLA AT SAN DOMINGO.—HIS VIOLENT ASSUMPTION OF THE COMMAND.

[1500.]

Columbus was still at Fort Conception, regulating the affairs of the Vega, after the catastrophe of the sedition of Moxica; his brother, the Adelantado, accompanied by Roldan, was pursuing and arresting the fugitive rebels in Xaragua; and Don Diego Columbus remained in temporary command at San Domingo. Faction had worn itself out; the insurgents had brought down ruin upon themselves; and the island appeared delivered from the domination of violent and lawless men.

Such was the state of public affairs, when, on the morning of the 23d of August, two caravels were descried off the harbor of San Domingo, about a league at sea. They were standing off and on, waiting until the sea breeze, which generally prevails about ten o'clock, should carry them into port. Don Diego Columbus supposed them to be ships sent from Spain with supplies, and hoped to find on board his nephew Diego, whom the admiral had requested might be sent out to assist him in his various concerns. A canoe was immediately dispatched to obtain information; which, approaching the caravels, inquired what news they brought, and whether Diego, the son of the admiral, was on board.

Bobadilla himself replied from the principal vessel, announcing himself as a commissioner sent out to investigate the late rebellion. The master of the caravel then inquired about the news of the island, and was informed of the recent transactions. Seven of the rebels, he was told, had been hanged that week, and five more were in the fortress of San Domingo, condemned to suffer the same fate. Among these were Pedro Requelme and Fernando de Guevara, the young cavalier whose passion for the daughter of Anacaona had been the original cause of the rebellion. Further conversation passed, in the course of which Bobadilla ascertained that the admiral and the Adelantado were absent, and Don Diego Columbus in command.

When the canoe returned to the city, with the news that a commissioner had arrived to make inquisition into the late troubles, there was a great stir and agitation throughout the community. Knots of whisperers gathered at every corner; those who were conscious of malpractices were filled with consternation; while those who had grievances, real or imaginary, to complain of, especially those whose pay was in arrear, appeared with joyful countenances.*

As the vessels entered the river, Bobadilla beheld on either bank a gibbet with the body of a Spaniard hanging on it, apparently but lately executed. He considered these as conclusive proofs of the alleged cruelty of Columbus. Many boats came off to the ship, every one being anxious to pay early court to this public censor. Bobadilla remained on board all day, in the course of which he collected much of the rumors of the place; and as those who sought to secure his favor, were those who had most to

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. lib. i. cap. 169. Herrera, Hist. Ind. decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 8.

fear from his investigations, it is evident that the nature of the rumors must generally have been unfavorable to Columbus. In fact, before Bobadilla landed, if not before he arrived, the culpability of the admiral was decided in his mind.

The next morning he landed with all his followers, and went to the church to attend mass, where he found Don Diego Columbus, Rodrigo Perez, the lieutenant of the admiral, and other persons of note. Mass being ended, and those persons, with a multitude of the populace, being assembled at the door of the church, Bobadilla ordered his letters patent to be read, authorizing him to investigate the rebellion, seize the persons, and sequestrate the property of delinquents, and proceed against them with the utmost rigor of the law; commanding also the admiral, and all others in authority, to assist him in the discharge of his duties. The letter being read, he demanded of Don Diego and the alcaldes, to surrender to him the persons of Fernando Guevara, Pedro Requelme, and the other prisoners, with the depositions taken concerning them; and ordered that the parties by whom they were accused, and those by whose command they had been taken, should appear before him.

Don Diego replied, that the proceedings had emanated from the orders of the admiral, who held superior powers to any Bobadilla could possess, and without whose authority he could do nothing. He requested, at the same time, a copy of the letter patent, that he might send it to his brother, to whom alone the matter appertained. This Bobadilla refused, observing that, if Don Diego had power to do nothing, it was useless to give him a copy. He added, that since the office and authority he had proclaimed appeared to have no weight, he would try what power and consequence there was in the name of governor; and would show them

that he had command, not merely over them, but over the admiral himself.

The little community remained in breathless suspense, awaiting the portentous movements of Bobadilla. The next morning he appeared at mass, resolved on assuming those powers which were only to have been produced after full investigation, and ample proof of the mal-conduct of Columbus. When mass was over, and the eager populace had gathered round the door of the church, Bobadilla, in presence of Don Diego and Rodrigo Perez, ordered his other royal patent to be read, investing him with the government of the islands, and of Terra Firma.

The patent being read, Bobadilla took the customary oath, and then claimed the obedience of Don Diego, Rodrigo Perez, and all present, to this royal instrument; on the authority of which he again demanded the prisoners confined in the fortress. In reply, they professed the utmost deference to the letter of the sovereigns, but again observed that they held the prisoners in obedience to the admiral, to whom the sovereigns had granted letters of a higher nature.

The self-importance of Bobadilla was incensed at this non-compliance, especially as he saw it had some effect upon the populace, who appeared to doubt his authority. He now produced the third mandate of the crown, ordering Columbus and his brothers to deliver up all fortresses, ships, and other royal property. To win the public completely to his side, he read also the additional mandate issued on the 30th of May, of the same year, ordering him to pay the arrears of wages due to all persons in the royal service, and to compel the admiral to pay the arrears of those to whom he was accountable.

This last document was received with shouts by the multitude,

many having long arrears due to them in consequence of the poverty of the treasury. Flushed with his growing importance, Bobadilla again demanded the prisoners; threatening, if refused, to take them by force. Meeting with the same reply, he repaired to the fortress to execute his threats. This post was commanded by Miguel Diaz, the same Arragonian cavalier who had once taken refuge among the Indians on the banks of the Ozema, won the affections of the female cacique Catalina, received from her information of the neighboring gold mines, and induced his countrymen to remove to those parts.

When Bobadilla came before the fortress, he found the gates closed, and the alcayde, Miguel Diaz, upon the battlements. He ordered his letters patent to be read with a loud voice, the signatures and seals to be held up to view, and then demanded the surrender of the prisoners. Diaz requested a copy of the letters; but this Bobadilla refused, alleging that there was no time for delay, the prisoners being under sentence of death, and liable at any moment to be executed. He threatened at the same time, that if they were not given up, he would proceed to extremities, and Diaz should be answerable for the consequences. The wary alcayde again required time to reply, and a copy of the letters; saying that he held the fortress for the king, by the command of the admiral, his lord, who had gained these territories and islands, and that when the latter arrived, he should obey his orders.*

The whole spirit of Bobadilla was roused within him, at the refusal of the alcayde. Assembling all the people he had brought from Spain, together with the sailors of the ships, and the rabble of the place, he exhorted them to aid him in getting possession of the prisoners, but to harm no one unless in case of resistance.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 179.

The mob shouted assent, for Bobadilla was already the idol of the multitude. About the hour of vespers, he set out at the head of this motley army, to storm a fortress destitute of a garrison, and formidable only in name, being calculated to withstand only a naked and slightly-armed people. The accounts of this transaction have something in them bordering on the ludicrous, and give it the air of absurd rhodomontade. Bobadilla assailed the portal with great impetuosity, the frail bolts and locks of which gave way at the first shock, and allowed him easy admission. In the meantime, however, his zealous myrmidons applied ladders to the walls, as if about to carry the place by assault, and to experience a desperate defence. The alcayde, Miguel Diaz, and Don Diego de Alvarado, alone appeared on the battlements; they had drawn swords, but offered no resistance. Bobadilla entered the fortress in triumph, and without molestation. The prisoners were found in a chamber in irons. He ordered that they should be brought up to him to the top of the fortress, where, having put a few questions to them, as a matter of form, he gave them in charge to an alguazil named Juan de Espinosa.*

Such was the arrogant and precipitate entrance into office of Francisco de Bobadilla. He had reversed the order of his written instructions; having seized upon the government before he had investigated the conduct of Columbus. He continued his career in the same spirit; acting as if the case had been prejudged in Spain, and he had been sent out merely to degrade the admiral from his employments, not to ascertain the manner in which he had fulfilled them. He took up his residence in the house of Columbus, seized upon his arms, gold, plate, jewels, horses, together with his letters, and various manuscripts, both public and

* Las Casas, ubi sup. Herrera, ubi sup.

private, even to his most secret papers. He gave no account of the property thus seized; and which he no doubt considered already confiscated to the crown, excepting that he paid out of it the wages of those to whom the admiral was in arrears.* To increase his favor with the people, he proclaimed, on the second day of his assumption of power, a general license for the term of twenty years, to seek for gold, paying merely one eleventh to government, instead of a third as heretofore. At the same time, he spoke in the most disrespectful and unqualified terms of Columbus, saying that he was empowered to send him home in chains, and that neither he nor any of his lineage would ever again be permitted to govern in the island.†

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 85. Las Casas. Herrera, ubi sup.

† Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan

CHAPTER III.

COLUMBUS SUMMONED TO APPEAR BEFORE BOBADILLA.

[1500.]

WHEN the tidings reached Columbus at Fort Conception of the high-handed proceedings of Bobadilla, he considered them the unauthorized acts of some rash adventurer like Ojeda. Since government had apparently thrown open the door to private enterprise, he might expect to have his path continually crossed, and his jurisdiction infringed by bold intermeddlers, feigning or fancying themselves authorized to interfere in the affairs of the colony. Since the departure of Ojeda another squadron had touched upon the coast, and produced a transient alarm, being an expedition under one of the Pinzons, licensed by the sovereigns to make discoveries. There had also been a rumor of another squadron hovering about the island, which proved, however, to be unfounded.*

The conduct of Bobadilla bore all the appearance of a lawless usurpation of some intruder of the kind. He had possessed himself forcibly of the fortress, and consequently of the town. He had issued extravagant licenses injurious to the government, and apparently intended only to make partisans among the peo-

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

ple; and had threatened to throw Columbus himself in irons. That this man could really be sanctioned by government, in such intemperate measures, was repugnant to belief. The admiral's consciousness of his own services, the repeated assurances he had received of high consideration on the part of the sovereigns, and the perpetual prerogatives granted to him under their hand and seal, with all the solemnity that a compact could possess, all forbade him to consider the transactions at San Domingo otherwise than as outrages on his authority by some daring or misguided individual.

To be nearer to San Domingo, and obtain more correct information, he proceeded to Bonao, which was now beginning to assume the appearance of a settlement, several Spaniards having erected houses there, and cultivated the adjacent country. He had scarcely reached the place, when an alcalde, bearing a staff of office, arrived there from San Domingo, proclaiming the appointment of Bobadilla to the government, and bearing copies of his letters patent. There was no especial letter or message sent to the admiral, nor were any of the common forms of courtesy and ceremony observed in superseding him in the command; all the proceedings of Bobadilla towards him were abrupt and insulting.

Columbus was exceedingly embarrassed how to act. It was evident that Bobadilla was intrusted with extensive powers by the sovereigns, but that they could have exercised such a sudden, unmerited, and apparently capricious act of severity, as that of divesting him of all his commands, he could not believe. He endeavored to persuade himself that Bobadilla was some person sent out to exercise the functions of chief judge, according to the request he had written home to the sovereigns, and that they had

intrusted him likewise with provisional powers to make an inquest into the late troubles of the island. All beyond these powers he tried to believe were mere assumptions and exaggerations of authority, as in the case of Aguado. At all events, he was determined to act upon such presumption, and to endeavor to gain time. If the monarchs had really taken any harsh measures with respect to him, it must have been in consequence of misrepresentations. The least delay might give them an opportunity of ascertaining their error, and making the necessary amends.

He wrote to Bobadilla, therefore, in guarded terms, welcoming him to the island; cautioning him against precipitate measures, especially in granting licenses to collect gold; informing him that he was on the point of going to Spain, and in a little time would leave him in command, with every thing fully and clearly explained. He wrote at the same time to the like purport to certain monks who had come out with Bobadilla, though he observes that these letters were only written to gain time.* He received no replies: but while an insulting silence was observed towards him, Bobadilla filled up several of the blank letters, of which he had a number signed by the sovereigns, and sent them to Roldan, and other of the admiral's enemies, the very men whom he had been sent out to judge. These letters were full of civilities and promises of favor.†

To prevent any mischief which might arise from the licenses and indulgences so prodigally granted by Bobadilla, Columbus published by word and letter, that the powers assumed by him

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

† Idem. Herrera, decad. i. lib.

could not be valid, nor his licenses availing, as he himself held superior powers granted to him in perpetuity by the crown, which could no more be superseded in this instance, than they had been in that of Aguado.

For some time Columbus remained in this anxious and perplexed state of mind, uncertain what line of conduct to pursue in so singular and unlooked-for a conjuncture. He was soon brought to a decision. Francisco Velasquez, deputy treasurer, and Juan de Trasierra, a Franciscan friar, arrived at Bonao, and delivered to him the royal letter of credence, signed by the sovereigns on the 26th of May, 1499, commanding him to give implicit faith and obedience to Bobadilla; and they delivered, at the same time, a summons from the latter to appear immediately before him.

This laconic letter from the sovereigns struck at once at the root of all his dignity and power. He no longer made hesitation or demur, but complying with the peremptory summons of Bobadilla, departed almost alone and unattended, for San Domingo.*

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 9. Letter to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

CHAPTER IV.

COLUMBUS AND HIS BROTHERS ARRESTED AND SENT TO SPAIN IN CHAINS.

[1500.]

THE tidings that a new governor had arrived, and that Columbus was in disgrace, and to be sent home in chains, circulated rapidly through the Vega, and the colonists hastened from all parts to San Domingo to make interest with Bobadilla. It was soon perceived that there was no surer way than that of vilifying his predecessor. Bobadilla felt that he had taken a rash step in seizing upon the government, and that his own safety required the conviction of Columbus. He listened eagerly, therefore, to all accusations, public or private; and welcome was he who could bring any charge, however extravagant, against the admiral and his brothers.

Hearing that the admiral was on his way to the city, he made a bustle of preparation, and armed the troops, affecting to believe a rumor, that Columbus had called upon the caciques of the Vega to aid him with their subjects in a resistance to the commands of government. No grounds appear for this absurd report, which was probably invented to give a coloring of precaution to subsequent measures of violence and insult. The admiral's brother, Don Diego, was seized, thrown in irons, and confined on

board of a caravel, without any reason being assigned for his imprisonment.

In the meantime Columbus pursued his journey to San Domingo, traveling in a lonely manner, without guards, or retinue. Most of his people were with the Adelantado, and he had declined being attended by the remainder. He had heard of the rumors of the hostile intentions of Bobadilla; and although he knew that violence was threatened to his person, he came in this unpretending manner, to manifest his pacific feelings, and to remove all suspicion.*

No sooner did Bobadilla hear of his arrival, than he gave orders to put him in irons, and confine him in the fortress. This outrage to a person of such dignified and venerable appearance, and such eminent merit, seemed, for the time, to shock even his enemies. When the irons were brought, every one present shrank from the task of putting them on him, either from a sentiment of compassion at so great a reverse of fortune, or out of habitual reverence for his person. To fill the measure of ingratitude meted out to him, it was one of his own domestics, "a graceless and shameless cook," says Las Casas, "who, with unwashed front, riveted the fetters with as much readiness and alacrity, as though he were serving him with choice and savory viands. I knew the fellow," adds the venerable historian, "and I think his name was Espinosa."†

Columbus conducted himself with characteristic magnanimity under the injuries heaped upon him. There is a noble scorn which swells and supports the heart, and silences the tongue of the truly great, when enduring the insults of the unworthy. Colum-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 180. † Idem, lib. i. cap. 180.

bus could not stoop to deprecate the arrogance of a weak and violent man like Bobadilla. He looked beyond this shallow agent, and all his petty tyranny, to the sovereigns who had employed him. Their injustice or ingratitude alone could wound his spirit; and he felt assured that when the truth came to be known, they would blush to find how greatly they had wronged him. With this proud assurance, he bore all present indignities in silence.

Bobadilla, although he had the admiral and Don Diego in his power, and had secured the venal populace, felt anxious and ill at ease. The Adelantado, with an armed force under his command, was still in the distant province of Xaragua, in pursuit of the rebels. Knowing his soldier-like and determined spirit, he feared he might take some violent measure when he should hear of the ignominious treatment and imprisonment of his brothers. He doubted whether any order from himself would have any effect, except to exasperate the stern Don Bartholomew. He sent a demand, therefore, to Columbus, to write to his brother, requesting him to repair peaceably to San Domingo, and forbidding him to execute the persons he held in confinement: Columbus readily complied. He exhorted his brother to submit quietly to the authority of his sovereigns, and to endure all present wrongs and indignities, under the confidence that when they arrived at Castile, every thing would be explained and redressed.*

* Peter Martyr mentions a vulgar rumor of the day, that the admiral, not knowing what might happen, wrote a letter in cipher to the Adelantado, urging him to come with arms in his hands to prevent any violence that might be contrived against him; that the Adelantado advanced, in effect, with his armed force, but having the imprudence to proceed some distance ahead of it, was surprised by the governor, before his men could come to his succor, and that the letter in cipher had been sent to Spain. This must have been one of the

On receiving this letter, Don Bartholomew immediately complied. Relinquishing his command, he hastened peacefully to San Domingo, and on arriving experienced the same treatment with his brothers, being put in irons and confined on board of a caravel. They were kept separate from each other, and no communication permitted between them. Bobadilla did not see them himself, nor did he allow others to visit them; but kept them in ignorance of the cause of their imprisonment, the crimes with which they were charged, and the process that was going on against them.*

It has been questioned whether Bobadilla really had authority for the arrest and imprisonment of the admiral and his brothers;† and whether such violence and indignity was in any case contemplated by the sovereigns. He may have fancied himself empow

groundless rumors of the day, circulated to prejudice the public mind. Nothing of the kind appears among the charges in the inquest made by Bobadilla, and which was seen, and extracts made from it, by Las Casas, for his history. It is, in fact, in total contradiction to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus.

* Charlevoix, in his History of San Domingo (lib. iii. p. 199) states, that the suit against Columbus was conducted in writing; that written charges were sent to him, to which he replied in the same way. This is contrary to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus. The admiral himself, in his letter to the Nurse of Prince Juan, after relating the manner in which he and his brothers had been thrown into irons, and confined separately, without being visited by Bobadilla, or permitted to see any other persons, expressly adds, "I make oath that I do not know for what I am imprisoned." Again, in a letter written some time afterwards from Jamaica, he says, "I was taken and thrown with two of my brothers in a ship, loaded with irons, with little clothing and much ill-treatment, without being summoned or convicted by justice."

† Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 10. Oviedo, Cronica, lib. iii. cap. 6.

ered by the clause in the letter of instructions, dated March 21st, 1499, in which, speaking of the rebellion of Roldan, "he is authorized to *seize the persons, and sequestrate the property* of those who appeared to be culpable, and then to proceed against them and against the absent, with the highest civil and criminal penalties." This evidently had reference to the persons of Roldan and his followers, who were then in arms, and against whom Columbus had sent home complaints; and this, by a violent construction, Bobadilla seems to have wrested into an authority for seizing the person of the admiral himself. In fact, in the whole course of his proceedings, he reversed and confounded the order of his instructions. His first step should have been to proceed against the rebels; this he made the last. His last step should have been, in case of ample evidence against the admiral, to have superseded him in office; and this he made the first, without waiting for evidence. Having predetermined, from the very outset, that Columbus was in the wrong, by the same rule he had to presume that all the opposite parties were in the right. It became indispensable to his own justification to inculpate the admiral and his brothers; and the rebels he had been sent to judge became, by this singular perversion of rule, necessary and cherished evidences, to criminate those against whom they had rebelled.

The intentions of the crown, however, are not to be vindicated at the expense of its miserable agent. If proper respect had been felt for the rights and dignities of Columbus, Bobadilla would never have been intrusted with powers so extensive, undefined, and discretionary; nor would he have dared to proceed to such lengths, with such rudeness and precipitation, had he not felt assured that it would not be displeasing to the jealous-minded Ferdinand.

The old scenes of the time of Aguado were now renewed with tenfold virulence, and the old charges revived, with others still more extravagant. From the early and never-to-be-forgotten outrage upon Castilian pride, of compelling hidalgos, in time of emergency, to labor in the construction of works necessary to the public safety, down to the recent charge of levying war against the government, there was not a hardship, abuse, nor sedition in the island, that was not imputed to the misdeeds of Columbus and his brothers. Besides the usual accusations of inflicting oppressive labor, unnecessary tasks, painful restrictions, short allowances of food, and cruel punishments upon the Spaniards, and waging unjust wars against the natives, they were now charged with preventing the conversion of the latter, that they might send them slaves to Spain, and profit by their sale. This last charge, so contrary to the pious feelings of the admiral, was founded on his having objected to the baptism of certain Indians of mature age, until they could be instructed in the doctrines of Christianity; justly considering it an abuse of that holy sacrament to administer it thus blindly.*

Columbus was charged, also, with having secreted pearls, and other precious articles, collected in his voyage along the coast of Paria, and with keeping the sovereigns in ignorance of the nature of his discoveries there, in order to exact new privileges from them; yet it was notorious that he had sent home specimens of the pearls, and journals and charts of his voyage, by which others had been enabled to pursue his track.

Even the late tumults, now that the rebels were admitted as evidence, were all turned into matters of accusation. They were represented as spirited and loyal resistances to tyranny exercised

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

upon the colonists and the natives. The well-merited punishments inflicted upon certain of the ringleaders, were cited as proofs of a cruel and revengeful disposition, and a secret hatred of Spaniards. Bobadilla believed, or affected to believe, all these charges. He had, in a manner, made the rebels his confederates in the ruin of Columbus. It was become a common cause with them. He could no longer, therefore, conduct himself towards them as a judge. Guevara, Requelme, and their fellow-convicts, were discharged almost without the form of a trial, and it is even said were received into favor and countenance. Roldan, from the very first, had been treated with confidence by Bobadilla, and honored with his correspondence. All the others, whose conduct had rendered them liable to justice, received either a special acquittal or a general pardon. It was enough to have been opposed in any way to Columbus, to obtain full justification in the eyes of Bobadilla.

The latter had now collected a weight of testimony, and produced a crowd of witnesses, sufficient, as he conceived, to insure the condemnation of the prisoners, and his own continuance in command. He determined, therefore, to send the admiral and his brothers home in chains, in the vessels ready for sea, transmitting at the same time the inquest taken in their case, and writing private letters, enforcing the charges made against them, and advising that Columbus should on no account be restored to the command, which he had so shamefully abused.

San Domingo now swarmed with miscreants just delivered from the dungeon and the gibbet. It was a perfect jubilee of triumphant villany and dastard malice. Every base spirit, which had been awed into obsequiousness by Columbus and his brothers when in power, now started up to revenge itself upon them when

in chains. The most injurious slanders were loudly proclaimed in the streets; insulting pasquinades and inflammatory libels were posted up at every corner; and horns were blown in the neighborhood of their prisons, to taunt them with the exultings of the rabble.* When these rejoicings of his enemies reached him in his dungeon, and Columbus reflected on the inconsiderate violence already exhibited by Bobadilla, he knew not how far his rashness and confidence might carry him, and began to entertain apprehensions for his life.

The vessels being ready to make sail, Alonzo de Villejo was appointed to take charge of the prisoners, and carry them to Spain. This officer had been brought up by an uncle of Fonseca, was in the employ of that bishop, and had come out with Bobadilla. The latter instructed him, on arriving at Cadiz, to deliver his prisoners into the hands of Fonseca, or of his uncle, thinking thereby to give the malignant prelate a triumphant gratification. This circumstance gave weight with many to a report that Bobadilla was secretly instigated and encouraged in his violent measures by Fonseca, and was promised his protection and influence at court, in case of any complaints of his conduct.†

Villejo undertook the office assigned him, but he discharged it in a more generous manner than was intended. "This Alonzo de Villejo," says the worthy Las Casas, "was a hidalgo of honorable character, and my particular friend." He certainly showed himself superior to the low malignity of his patrons. When he arrived with a guard to conduct the admiral from the prison to the ship, he found him in chains in a state of silent despondency So violently had he been treated, and so savage were the pas-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 86. † Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 180, MS.

sions let loose against him, that he feared he should be sacrificed without an opportunity of being heard, and his name go down sullied and dishonored to posterity. When he beheld the officer enter with the guard, he thought it was to conduct him to the scaffold. "Villejo," said he, mournfully, "whither are you taking me?" "To the ship, your Excellency, to embark," replied the other. "To embark!" repeated the admiral, earnestly; "Villejo! do you speak the truth?" "By the life of your Excellency," replied the honest officer, "it is true!" With these words the admiral was comforted, and felt as one restored from death to life. Nothing can be more touching and expressive than this little colloquy, recorded by the venerable Las Casas, who doubtless had it from the lips of his friend Villejo.

The caravels set sail early in October, bearing off Columbus shackled like the vilest of culprits, amidst the scoffs and shouts of a miscreant rabble, who took a brutal joy in heaping insults on his venerable head, and sent curses after him from the shores of the island he had so recently added to the civilized world. Fortunately the voyage was favorable, and of but moderate duration, and was rendered less disagreeable by the conduct of those to whom he was given in custody. The worthy Villejo, though in the service of Fonseca, felt deeply moved at the treatment of Columbus. The master of the caravel, Andreas Martin, was equally grieved: they both treated the admiral with profound respect and assiduous attention. They would have taken off his irons, but to this he would not consent. "No," said he proudly, "their majesties commanded me by letter to submit to whatever Bobadilla should order in their name; by their authority he has put upon me these chains, I will wear them until they shall order

them to be taken off, and I will preserve them afterwards as relics and memorials of the reward of my services."*

"He did so," adds his son Fernando; "I saw them always hanging in his cabinet, and he requested that when he died they might be buried with him!"†

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 180, MS. † Hist. del Almirante, cap. 86

BOOK XIV.

CHAPTER I.

SENSATION IN SPAIN ON THE ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS IN IRONS.—HIS APPEARANCE AT COURT.

[1500.]

THE arrival of Columbus at Cadiz, a prisoner and in chains, produced almost as great a sensation as his triumphant return from his first voyage. It was one of those striking and obvious facts, which speak to the feelings of the multitude, and preclude the necessity of reflection. No one stopped to inquire into the case. It was sufficient to be told that Columbus was brought home in irons from the world he had discovered. There was a general burst of indignation in Cadiz, and in the powerful and opulent Seville, which was echoed throughout all Spain. If the ruin of Columbus had been the intention of his enemies, they had defeated their object by their own violence. One of those reactions took place, so frequent in the public mind, when persecution is pushed to an unguarded length. Those of the populace who had recently been loud in their clamor against Columbus, were now as loud in their reprobation of his treatment, and a strong sympathy was expressed, against which it would have been odious for the government to contend.

The tidings of his arrival, and of the ignominious manner in which he had been brought, reached the court at Granada, and filled the halls of the Alhambra with murmurs of astonishment. Columbus, full of his wrongs, but ignorant how far they had been authorized by the sovereigns, had forborne to write to them. In the course of his voyage, however, he had penned a long letter to Doña Juana de la Torre, the aya of Prince Juan, a lady high in favor with Queen Isabella. This letter, on his arrival at Cadiz, Andreas Martin, the captain of the caravel, permitted him to send off privately by express. It arrived, therefore, before the protocol of the proceedings instituted by Bobadilla, and from this document the sovereigns derived their first intimation of his treatment.* It contained a statement of the late transactions of the island, and of the wrongs he had suffered, written with his usual artlessness and energy. To specify the contents, would be but to recapitulate circumstances already recorded. Some expressions, however, which burst from him in the warmth of his feelings, are worthy of being noted. "The slanders of worthless men," says he, "have done me more injury than all my services have profited me." Speaking of the misrepresentations to which he was subjected, he observes: "Such is the evil name which I have acquired, that if I were to build hospitals and churches, they would be called dens of robbers." After relating in indignant terms the conduct of Bobadilla, in seeking testimony respecting his administration from the very men who had rebelled against him, and throwing himself and his brothers in irons, without letting them know the offences with which they were charged, "I have been much aggrieved," he adds, "in that a person should be sent out to investigate my conduct, who knew that if the evidence

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 182.

which he could send home should appear to be of a serious nature, he would remain in the government." He complains that, in forming an opinion of his administration, allowances had not been made for the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend, and the wild state of the country over which he had to rule. "I was judged," he observes, "as a governor who had been sent to take charge of a well-regulated city, under the dominion of well-established laws, where there was no danger of every thing running to disorder and ruin; but I ought to be judged as a captain, sent to subdue a numerous and hostile people, of manners and religion opposite to ours, living not in regular towns, but in forests and mountains. It ought to be considered that I have brought all these under subjection to their majesties, giving them dominion over another world, by which Spain, heretofore poor, has suddenly become rich. Whatever errors I may have fallen into, they were not with an evil intention; and I believe their majesties will credit what I say. I have known them to be merciful to those who have wilfully done them disservice; I am convinced that they will have still more indulgence for me, who have erred innocently, or by compulsion, as they will hereafter be more fully informed; and I trust they will consider my great services, the advantages of which are every day more and more apparent."

When this letter was read to the noble-minded Isabella, and she found how grossly Columbus had been wronged and the royal authority abused, her heart was filled with mingled sympathy and indignation. The tidings were confirmed by a letter from the alcalde or corregidor of Cadiz, into whose hands Columbus and his brothers had been delivered, until the pleasure of the sove-

reigns should be known;* and by another letter from Alonzo de Villejo, expressed in terms accordant with his humane and honorable conduct towards his illustrious prisoner.

However Ferdinand might have secretly felt disposed against Columbus, the momentary tide of public feeling was not to be resisted. He joined with his generous queen in her reprobation of the treatment of the admiral, and both sovereigns hastened to give evidence to the world, that his imprisonment had been without their authority, and contrary to their wishes. Without waiting to receive any documents that might arrive from Bobadilla, they sent orders to Cadiz that the prisoners should be instantly set at liberty, and treated with all distinction. They wrote a letter to Columbus, couched in terms of gratitude and affection, expressing their grief at all that he had suffered, and inviting him to court. They ordered, at the same time, that two thousand ducats should be advanced to defray his expenses.†

The loyal heart of Columbus was again cheered by this declaration of his sovereigns. He felt conscious of his integrity, and anticipated an immediate restitution of all his rights and dignities. He appeared at court in Granada on the 17th of December, not as a man ruined and disgraced, but richly dressed, and attended by an honorable retinue. He was received by the sovereigns with unqualified favor and distinction. When the queen beheld this venerable man approach, and thought on all he had deserved and all he had suffered, she was moved to tears. Columbus had

* Oviedo, Cronica, lib. iii. cap. 6.

† Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 182. Two thousand ducats, or two thousand eight hundred and forty-six dollars, equivalent to eight thousand five hundred and thirty-eight dollars of the present day.

borne up firmly against the rude conflicts of the world,—he had endured with lofty scorn the injuries and insults of ignoble men; but he possessed strong and quick sensibility. When he found himself thus kindly received by his sovereigns, and beheld tears in the benign eyes of Isabella, his long-suppressed feelings burst forth: he threw himself on his knees, and for some time could not utter a word for the violence of his tears and sobbings.*

Ferdinand and Isabella raised him from the ground, and endeavored to encourage him by the most gracious expressions. As soon as he regained self-possession, he entered into an eloquent and high-minded vindication of his loyalty, and the zeal he had ever felt for the glory and advantage of the Spanish crown, declaring that if at any time he had erred, it had been through inexperience in government, and the extraordinary difficulties by which he had been surrounded.

There needed no vindication on his part. The intemperance of his enemies had been his best advocate. He stood in presence of his sovereigns a deeply-injured man, and it remained for them to vindicate themselves to the world from the charge of ingratitude towards their most deserving subject. They expressed their indignation at the proceedings of Bobadilla, which they disavowed, as contrary to their instructions, and declared that he should be immediately dismissed from his command.

In fact, no public notice was taken of the charges sent home by Bobadilla, nor of the letters written in support of them. The sovereigns took every occasion to treat Columbus with favor and distinction, assuring him that his grievances should be redressed, his property restored, and he reinstated in all his privileges and dignities.

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap 10.

It was on the latter point that Columbus was chiefly solicitous. Mercenary considerations had scarcely any weight in his mind. Glory had been the great object of his ambition, and he felt that, as long as he remained suspended from his employments, a tacit censure rested on his name. He expected, therefore, that the moment the sovereigns should be satisfied of the rectitude of his conduct, they would be eager to make him amends; that a restitution of his viceroyalty would immediately take place, and he should return in triumph to San Domingo. Here, however, he was doomed to experience a disappointment which threw a gloom over the remainder of his days. To account for this flagrant want of justice and gratitude in the crown, it is expedient to notice a variety of events which had materially affected the interests of Columbus in the eyes of the politic Ferdinand.

CHAPTER II.

CONTEMPORARY VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY.

THE general license granted by the Spanish sovereigns in 1495, to undertake voyages of discovery, had given rise to various expeditions by enterprising individuals, chiefly persons who had sailed with Columbus in his first voyages. The government, unable to fit out many armaments itself, was pleased to have its territories thus extended, free of cost, and its treasury at the same time benefited by the share of the proceeds of these voyages, reserved as a kind of duty to the crown. These expeditions had chiefly taken place while Columbus was in partial disgrace with the sovereigns. His own charts and journal served as guides to the adventurers; and his magnificent accounts of Paria and the adjacent coasts had chiefly excited their cupidity.

Beside the expedition of Ojeda, already noticed, in the course of which he touched at Xaragua, one had been undertaken at the same time by Pedro Alonzo Niño, native of Moguer, an able pilot, who had been with Columbus in the voyages to Cuba and Paria. Having obtained a license, he interested a rich merchant of Seville in the undertaking, who fitted out a caravel of fifty tons burden, under condition that his brother Christoval Guevra should have the command. They sailed from the bar of Saltes, a few days after Ojeda had sailed from Cadiz, in the spring of

1499, and arriving on the coast of Terra Firma, to the south of Paria, ran along it for some distance, passed through the Gulf, and thence went one hundred and thirty leagues along the shore of the present republic of Columbia, visiting what was afterwards called the Pearl Coast. They landed in various places; disposed of their European trifles to immense profit, and returned with a large store of gold and pearls; having made, in their diminutive bark, one of the most extensive and lucrative voyages yet accomplished.

About the same time, the Pinzons, that family of bold and opulent navigators, fitted out an armament of four caravels at Palos, manned in a great measure by their own relations and friends. Several experienced pilots embarked in it who had been with Columbus to Paria, and it was commanded by Vicente Yañez Pinzon. who had been captain of a caravel in the squadron of the admiral on his first voyage.

Pinzon was a hardy and experienced seaman, and did not, like the others, follow closely in the track of Columbus. Sailing in December, 1499, he passed the Canary and Cape de Verde Islands, standing southwest until he lost sight of the polar star. Here he encountered a terrible storm, and was exceedingly perplexed and confounded by the new aspect of the heavens. Nothing was yet known of the southern hemisphere, nor of the beautiful constellation of the cross, which in those regions has since supplied to mariners the place of the north star. The voyagers had expected to find at the south pole a star correspondent to that of the north. They were dismayed at beholding no guide of the kind, and thought there must be some prominent swelling of the earth, which hid the pole from their view.*

* Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. ix.

Pinzon continued on, however, with great intrepidity. On the 26th of January, 1500, he saw, at a distance, a great headland, which he called Cape Santa Maria de la Consolacion, but which has since been named Cape St. Augustine. He landed and took possession of the country in the name of their catholic majesties; being a part of the territories since called the Brazils. Standing thence westward, he discovered the Maragnon, since called the River of the Amazons; traversed the Gulf of Paria, and continued across the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, until he found himself among the Bahamas, where he lost two of his vessels on the rocks, near the island of Jumeto. He returned to Palos in September, having added to his former glory that of being the first European who had crossed the equinoctial line in the western ocean, and of having discovered the famous kingdom of Brazil, from its commencement at the River Maragnon to its most eastern point. As a reward for his achievements, power was granted to him to colonize and govern the lands which he had discovered, and which extended southward from a little beyond the River of Maragnon to Cape St. Augustine.*

The little port of Palos, which had been so slow in furnishing the first squadron for Columbus, was now continually agitated by the passion for discovery. Shortly after the sailing of Pinzon, another expedition was fitted out there, by Diego Lepe, a native of the place, and manned by his adventurous townsmen. He sailed in the same direction with Pinzon; but discovered more of the southern continent than any other voyager of the day, or for twelve years afterwards. He doubled Cape St. Augustine, and ascertained that the coast beyond ran to the southwest. He

* Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 12. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

landed and performed the usual ceremonies of taking possession in the name of the Spanish sovereigns, and in one place carved their names on a magnificent tree, of such enormous magnitude, that seventeen men with their hands joined could not embrace the trunk. What enhanced the merit of his discoveries was, that he had never sailed with Columbus. He had with him, however, several skillful pilots, who had accompanied the admiral in his voyage.*

Another expedition of two vessels sailed from Cadiz, in October, 1500, under the command of Rodrigo Bastides of Seville. He explored the coast of Terra Firma, passing Cape de la Vela, the western limits of the previous discoveries on the main-land, continuing on to a port since called The Retreat, where afterwards was founded the sea-port of Nombre de Dios. His vessels being nearly destroyed by the teredo, or worm which abounds in those seas, he had great difficulty in reaching Xaragua in Hispaniola, where he lost his two caravels, and proceeded with his crew by land to San Domingo. Here he was seized and imprisoned by Bobadilla, under pretext that he had treated for gold with the natives of Xaragua.†

Such was the swarm of Spanish expeditions immediately resulting from the enterprises of Columbus; but others were also undertaken by foreign nations. In the year 1497, Sebastian Cabot, son of a Venetian merchant, resident in Bristol, sailing in the service of Henry VII, of England, navigated to the northern seas of the New World. Adopting the idea of Columbus, he sailed in quest of the shores of Cathay, and hoped to find a northwest passage to India. In this voyage he discovered Newfound-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 2. Muñoz, part unpublished. † Idem.

land, coasted Labrador to the fifty-sixth degree of north latitude, and then returning, ran down southwest to the Floridas, when, his provisions beginning to fail, he returned to England.* But vague and scanty accounts of this voyage exist, which was important, as including the first discovery of the northern continent of the New World.

The discoveries of rival nations, however, which most excited the attention and jealousy of the Spanish crown, were those of the Portuguese. Vasco de Gama, a man of rank, and consummate talent and intrepidity, had, at length, accomplished the great design of the late Prince Henry of Portugal, and by doubling the Cape of Good Hope in the year 1497, had opened the long sought-for route to India.

Immediately after Gama's return, a fleet of thirteen sail was fitted out to visit the magnificent countries of which he brought accounts. This expedition sailed on the 9th of March, 1500, for Calicut, under the command of Pedro Alvarez de Cabral. Having passed the Cape de Verde Islands, he sought to avoid the calms prevalent on the coast of Guinea, by stretching far to the west. Suddenly, on the 25th of April, he came in sight of land unknown to any one in his squadron; for, as yet, they had not heard of the discoveries of Pinzon and Lepe. He at first supposed it to be some great island; but after coasting it for some time, he became persuaded that it must be part of a continent. Having ranged along it somewhat beyond the fifteenth degree of southern latitude, he landed at a harbor which he called Porto Securo, and taking possession of the country for the crown of Portugal, dispatched a ship to Lisbon with the important tidings.†

* Hakluyt's Collection of Voyages, vol. iii. p. 7.

† Lafiteau, Conquetes des Portugais, lib. ii.

In this way did the Brazils come into the possession of Portugal, being to the eastward of the conventional line settled with Spain as the boundaries of their respective territories. Dr. Robertson, in recording this voyage of Cabral, concludes with one of his just and elegant remarks.

"Columbus's discovery of the New World was," he observes, "the effort of an active genius, guided by experience, and acting upon a regular plan, executed with no less courage than perseverance. But from this adventure of the Portuguese, it appears that chance might have accomplished that great design, which it is now the pride of human reason to have formed and perfected. If the sagacity of Columbus had not conducted mankind to America, Cabral, by a fortunate accident, might have led them, a few years later, to the knowledge of that extensive continent."*

* Robertson, Hist. America, book ii.

CHAPTER III.

NICHOLAS DE OVANDO APPOINTED TO SUPERSEDE BOBADILLA.

[1501.]

THE numerous discoveries briefly noticed in the preceding chapter, had produced a powerful effect upon the mind of Ferdinand. His ambition, his avarice, and his jealousy, were equally inflamed. He beheld boundless regions, teeming with all kinds of riches, daily opening before the enterprises of his subjects; but he beheld at the same time other nations launching forth into competition, emulous for a share of the golden world which he was eager to monopolize. The expeditions of the English, and the accidental discovery of the Brazils by the Portuguese, caused him much uneasiness. To secure his possession of the continent, he determined to establish local governments or commands, in the most important places, all to be subject to a general government, established at San Domingo, which was to be the metropolis.

With these considerations, the government, heretofore granted to Columbus, had risen vastly in importance; and while the restitution of it was the more desirable in his eyes, it became more and more a matter of repugnance to the selfish and jealous monarch. He had long repented having vested such great powers and prerogatives in any subject, particularly in a foreigner. At the time of granting them, he had no anticipation of such bound-

less countries to be placed under his command. He appeared almost to consider himself outwitted by Columbus in the arrangement; and every succeeding discovery, instead of increasing his grateful sense of the obligation, only made him repine the more at the growing magnitude of the reward. At length, however, the affair of Bobadilla had effected a temporary exclusion of Columbus from his high office, and that without any odium to the crown, and the wary monarch secretly determined that the door thus closed between him and his dignities should never again be opened.

Perhaps Ferdinand may really have entertained doubts as to the innocence of Columbus, with respect to the various charges made against him. He may have doubted also the sincerity of his loyalty, being a stranger, when he should find himself strong in his command, at a great distance from the parent country, with immense and opulent regions under his control. Columbus, himself, in his letters, alludes to reports circulated by his enemies, that he intended either to set up an independent sovereignty, or to deliver his discoveries into the hands of other potentates; and he appears to fear that these slanders might have made some impression on the mind of Ferdinand. But there was one other consideration which had no less force with the monarch in withholding this great act of justice—Columbus was no longer indispensable to him. He had made his great discovery; he had struck out the route to the New World, and now any one could follow it. A number of able navigators had sprung up under his auspices, and acquired experience in his voyages. They were daily besieging the throne with offers to fit out expeditions at their own cost, and to yield a share of the profits to the crown. Why should he, therefore, confer princely dignities and prero-

gatives for that which men were daily offering to perform gratuitously?

Such, from his after conduct, appears to have been the jealous and selfish policy which actuated Ferdinand in forbearing to reinstate Columbus in those dignities and privileges so solemnly granted to him by treaty, and which it was acknowledged he had never forfeited by misconduct.

This deprivation, however, was declared to be but temporary; and plausible reasons were given for the delay in his reappointment. It was observed that the elements of those violent factions, recently in arms against him, yet existed in the island; his immediate return might produce fresh exasperation; his personal safety might be endangered, and the island again thrown into confusion. Though Bobadilla, therefore, was to be immediately dismissed from command, it was deemed advisable to send out some officer of talent and discretion to supersede him, who might dispassionately investigate the recent disorders, remedy the abuses which had arisen, and expel all dissolute and factious persons from the colony. He should hold the government for two years, by which time it was trusted that all angry passions would be allayed, and turbulent individuals removed: Columbus might then resume the command with comfort to himself and advantage to the crown. With these reasons, and the promise which accompanied them, Columbus was obliged to content himself. There can be no doubt that they were sincere on the part of Isabella, and that it was her intention to reinstate him in the full enjoyment of his rights and dignities, after his apparently necessary suspension. Ferdinand, however, by his subsequent conduct, has forfeited all claim to any favorable opinion of the kind.

The person chosen to supersede Bobadilla was Don Nicholas

de Ovando, commander of Lares, of the order of Alcantara. He is described as of the middle size, fair complexioned, with a red beard, and a modest look, yet a tone of authority. He was fluent in speech, and gracious and courteous in his manners. A man of great prudence, says Las Casas, and capable of governing many people, but not of governing the Indians, on whom he inflicted incalculable injuries. He possessed great veneration for justice, was an enemy to avarice, sober in his mode of living, and of such humility, that when he rose afterwards to be grand commander of the order of Alcantara, he would never allow himself to be addressed by the title of respect attached to it.* Such is the picture drawn of him by historians; but his conduct in several important instances is in direct contradiction to it. He appears to have been plausible and subtle, as well as fluent and courteous; his humility concealed a great love of command, and in his transactions with Columbus he was certainly both ungenerous and unjust.

The various arrangements to be made, according to the new plan of colonial government, delayed for some time the departure of Ovando. In the meantime, every arrival brought intelligence of the disastrous state of the island, under the mal-administration of Bobadilla. He had commenced his career by an opposite policy to that of Columbus. Imagining that rigorous rule had been the rock on which his predecessors had split, he sought to conciliate the public by all kinds of indulgence. Having at the very outset relaxed the reins of justice and morality, he lost all command over the community; and such disorder and licentiousness ensued, that many, even of the opponents of Columbus, looked back with regret upon the strict but wholesome rule of himself and the Adelantado.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 3.

Bobadilla was not so much a bad as an imprudent and a weak man. He had not considered the dangerous excesses to which his policy would lead. Rash in grasping authority, he was feeble and temporizing in the exercise of it: he could not look beyond the present exigency. One dangerous indulgence granted to the colonists called for another; each was ceded in its turn, and thus he went on from error to error,—showing that in government there is as much danger to be apprehended from a weak as from a bad man.

He had sold the farms and estates of the crown at low prices, observing that it was not the wish of the monarchs to enrich themselves by them, but that they should redound to the profit of their subjects. He granted universal permission to work the mines, exacting only an eleventh of the produce for the crown. To prevent any diminution in the revenue, it became necessary, of course, to increase the quantity of gold collected. He obliged the caciques, therefore to furnish each Spaniard with Indians, to assist him both in the labors of the field and of the mine. To carry this into more complete effect, he made an enumeration of the natives of the island, reduced them into classes, and distributed them, according to his favor or caprice, among the colonists. The latter, at his suggestion, associated themselves in partnerships of two persons each, who were to assist one another with their respective capitals and Indians, one superintending the labors of the field, and the other the search for gold. The only injunction of Bobadilla was, to produce large quantities of ore. He had one saying continually in his mouth, which shows the pernicious and temporizing principle upon which he acted: "Make the most of your time," he would say, "there is no knowing how long it will last," alluding to the possibility of his being speedily recalled.

The colonists acted up to his advice, and so hard did they drive the poor natives, that the eleventh yielded more revenue to the crown than had ever been produced by the third under the government of Columbus. In the meantime, the unhappy natives suffered under all kinds of cruelties from their inhuman taskmasters. Little used to labor, feeble of constitution, and accustomed in their beautiful and luxuriant island to a life of ease and freedom, they sank under the toils imposed upon them, and the severities by which they were enforced. Las Casas gives an indignant picture of the capricious tyranny exercised over the Indians by worthless Spaniards, many of whom had been transported convicts from the dungeons of Castile. These wretches, who in their own countries had been the vilest among the vile, here assumed the tone of grand cavaliers. They insisted upon being attended by trains of servants. They took the daughters and female relations of caciques for their domestics, or rather for their concubines, nor did they limit themselves in number. When they traveled, instead of using the horses and mules with which they were provided, they obliged the natives to transport them upon their shoulders in litters, or hammocks, with others attending to hold umbrellas of palm-leaves over their heads to keep off the sun, and fans of feathers to cool them; and Las Casas affirms that he has seen the backs and shoulders of the unfortunate Indians who bore these litters, raw and bleeding from the task. When these arrogant upstarts arrived at an Indian village, they consumed and lavished away the provisions of the inhabitants, seizing upon whatever pleased their caprice, and obliging the cacique and his subjects to dance before them for their amusement. Their very pleasures were attended with cruelty. They never addressed the natives but in the most degrading terms, an-

on the least offence, or the least freak of ill-humor, inflicted blows and lashes, and even death itself.*

Such is but a faint picture of the evils which sprang up under the feeble rule of Bobadilla; and are sorrowfully described by Las Casas, from actual observation, as he visited the island just at the close of his administration. Bobadilla had trusted to the immense amount of gold, wrung from the miseries of the natives, to atone for all errors, and secure favor with the sovereigns; but he had totally mistaken his course. The abuses of his government soon reached the royal ear, and above all, the wrongs of the natives reached the benevolent heart of Isabella. Nothing was more calculated to arouse her indignation, and she urged the speedy departure of Ovando, to put a stop to these enormities.

In conformity to the plan already mentioned, the government of Ovando extended over the islands and Terra Firma, of which Hispaniola was to be the metropolis. He was to enter upon the exercise of his powers immediately upon his arrival, by procuration, sending home Bobadilla by the return of the fleet. He was instructed to inquire diligently into the late abuses, punishing the delinquents without favor or partiality, and removing all worthless persons from the island. He was to revoke immediately the license granted by Bobadilla for the general search after gold, it having been given without royal authority. He was to require, for the crown, a third of what was already collected, and one half of all that should be collected in future. He was empowered to build towns, granting them the privileges enjoyed by municipal corporations of Spain, and obliging the Spaniards, and particularly the soldiers, to reside in them, instead of scattering themselves over the island. Among many sage provisions, there were

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 1, MS.

others injurious and illiberal, characteristic of an age when the principles of commerce were but little understood; but which were continued by Spain long after the rest of the world had discarded them as the errors of dark and unenlightened times. The crown monopolized the trade of the colonies. No one could carry merchandises there on his own account. A royal factor was appointed, through whom alone were to be obtained supplies of European articles. The crown reserved to itself not only exclusive property in the mines, but in precious stones, and like objects of extraordinary value, and also in dyewoods. No strangers, and above all, no Moors nor Jews, were permitted to establish themsslves in the island, nor to go upon voyages of discovery. Such were some of the restrictions upon trade which Spain imposed upon her colonies, and which were followed up by others equally illiberal. Her commercial policy has been the scoff of modern times; but may not the present restrictions on trade, imposed by the most intelligent nations, be equally the wonder and the jest of future ages?

Isabella was particularly careful in providing for the kind treatment of the Indians. Ovando was ordered to assemble the caciques, and declare to them, that the sovereigns took them and their people under their especial protection. They were merely to pay tribute like other subjects of the crown, and it was to be collected with the utmost mildness and gentleness. Great pains were to be taken in their religious instruction; for which purpose twelve Franciscan friars were sent out, with a prelate named Antonio de Espinal, a venerable and pious man. This was the first formal introduction of the Franciscan order into the New World.*

All these precautions with respect to the natives were defeated

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 3, MS.

by one unwary provision. It was permitted that the Indians might be compelled to work in the mines, and in other employments; but this was limited to the royal service. They were to be engaged as hired laborers, and punctually paid. This provision led to great abuses and oppressions, and was ultimately as fatal to the natives, as could have been the most absolute slavery.

But, with that inconsistency frequent in human conduct, while the sovereigns were making regulations for the relief of the Indians, they encouraged a gross invasion of the rights and welfare of another race of human beings. Among their various decrees on this occasion, we find the first trace of negro slavery in the New World. It was permitted to carry to the colony Negro slaves born among Christians;* that is to say, slaves born in Seville and other parts of Spain, the children and descendants of natives brought from the Atlantic coast of Africa, where such traffic had for some time been carried on by the Spaniards and Portuguese. There are signal events in the course of history, which sometimes bear the appearance of temporal judgments. It is a fact worthy of observation, that Hispaniola, the place where this flagrant sin against nature and humanity was first introduced into the New World, has been the first to exhibit an awful retribution.

Amidst the various concerns which claimed the attention of the sovereigns, the interests of Columbus were not forgotten. Ovando was ordered to examine into all his accounts, without undertaking to pay them off. He was to ascertain the damages he had sustained by his imprisonment, the interruption of his privileges, and the confiscation of his effects. All the property confiscated by Bobadilla was to be restored; or if it had been sold, to

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 12.

be made good. If it had been employed in the royal service, Columbus was to be indemnified out of the treasury; if Bobadilla had appropriated it to his own use, he was to account for it out of his private purse. Equal care was to be taken to indemnify the brothers of the admiral for the losses they had wrongfully suffered by their arrest.

Columbus was likewise to receive the arrears of his revenues, and the same were to be punctually paid to him in future. He was permitted to have a factor resident in the island, to be present at the melting and marking of the gold, to collect his dues, and in short to attend to all his affairs. To this office he appointed Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal; and the sovereigns commanded that his agent should be treated with great respect.

The fleet appointed to convey Ovando to his government was the largest that had yet sailed to the New World. It consisted of thirty sail, five of them from ninety to one hundred and fifty tons burden, twenty-four caravels from thirty to ninety, and one bark of twenty-five tons.* The number of souls embarked in this fleet was about twenty-five hundred; many of them persons of rank and distinction, with their families.

That Ovando might appear with dignity in his new office, he was allowed to use silks, brocades, precious stones, and other articles of sumptuous attire, prohibited at that time in Spain, in consequence of the ruinous ostentation of the nobility. He was permitted to have seventy-two esquires as his body-guard, ten of whom were horsemen. With this expedition sailed Don Alonzo Maldonado, appointed as alguazil mayor, or chief justice, in place

* Muñoz, part inedit. Las Casas says the fleet consisted of thirty-two sail He states from memory, however; Muñoz from documents.

of Roldan, who was to be sent to Spain. There were artisans of various kinds: to these were added a physician, surgeon, and apothecary; and seventy-three married men* with their families, all of respectable character, destined to be distributed in four towns, and to enjoy peculiar privileges, that they might form the basis of a sound and useful population. They were to displace an equal number of the idle and dissolute who were to be sent from the island: this excellent measure had been especially urged and entreated by Columbus. There was also live stock, artillery, arms, munitions of all kinds; every thing, in short, that was required for the supply of the island.

Such was the style in which Ovando, a favorite of Ferdinand, and a native subject of rank, was fitted out to enter upon the government withheld from Columbus. The fleet put to sea on the thirteenth of February, 1502. In the early part of the voyage it was encountered by a terrible storm; one of the ships foundered, with one hundred and twenty passengers; the others were obliged to throw overboard every thing on deck, and were completely scattered. The shores of Spain were strewed with articles from the fleet, and a rumor spread that all the ships had perished. When this reached the sovereigns, they were so overcome with grief that they shut themselves up for eight days, and admitted no one to their presence. The rumor proved to be incorrect: but one ship was lost. The others assembled again at the island of Gomera in the Canaries, and pursuing their voyage, arrived at San Domingo on the 15th of April.†

* Muñoz, H. N. Mundo, part inedit.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 3, MS.

CHAPTER IV.

PROPOSITION OF COLUMBUS RELATIVE TO THE RECOVERY OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

[1500–1501.]

Columbus remained in the city of Granada upwards of nine months, endeavoring to extricate his affairs from the confusion into which they had been thrown by the rash conduct of Bobadilla, and soliciting the restoration of his offices and dignities. During this time he constantly experienced the smiles and attentions of the sovereigns, and promises were repeatedly made him that he should ultimately be reinstated in all his honors. He had long since, however, ascertained the great interval that may exist between promise and performance in a court. Had he been of a morbid and repining spirit, he had ample food for misanthropy. He beheld the career of glory which he had opened, thronged by favored adventurers; he witnessed preparations making to convey with unusual pomp a successor to that government from which he had been so wrongfully and rudely ejected; in the meanwhile his own career was interrupted, and as far as public employ is a gauge of royal favor, he remained apparently in disgrace.

His sanguine temperament was not long to be depressed; if checked in one direction it broke forth in another. His visionary

imagination was an internal light, which, in the darkest times, repelled all outward gloom, and filled his mind with splendid images and glorious speculations. In this time of evil, his vow to furnish, within seven years from the time of his discovery, fifty thousand foot soldiers, and five thousand horse, for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, recurred to his memory with peculiar force. The time had elapsed, but the vow remained unfulfilled, and the means to perform it had failed him. The New World, with all its treasures, had as yet produced expense instead of profit; and so far from being in a situation to set armies on foot by his own contributions, he found himself without property, without power, and without employ.

Destitute of the means of accomplishing his pious intentions, he considered it his duty to incite the sovereigns to the enterprise; and he felt emboldened to do so, from having originally proposed it as the great object to which the profits of his discoveries should be dedicated. He set to work, therefore, with his accustomed zeal, to prepare arguments for the purpose. During the intervals of business, he sought into the prophecies of the holy Scriptures, the writings of the fathers, and all kinds of sacred and speculative sources, for mystic portents and revelations which might be construed to bear upon the discovery of the New World, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the recovery of the holy sepulchre: three great events which he supposed to be predestined to succeed each other. These passages, with the assistance of a Carthusian friar, he arranged in order, illustrated by poetry, and collected into a manuscript volume, to be delivered to the sovereigns. He prepared, at the same time, a long letter, written with his usual fervor of spirit and simplicity of heart. It is one of those singular compositions which lay open the visionary part

of his character, and show the mystic and speculative reading with which he was accustomed to nurture his solemn and soaring imagination.

In this letter he urged the sovereigns to set on foot a crusade for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the power of the unbelievers. He entreated them not to reject his present advice as extravagant and impracticable, nor to heed the discredit that might be cast upon it by others; reminding them that his great scheme of discovery had originally been treated with similar contempt. He avowed in the fullest manner his persuasion, that, from his earliest infancy, he had been chosen by Heaven for the accomplishment of those two great designs, the discovery of the New World, and the rescue of the holy sepulchre. For this purpose, in his tender years, he had been guided by a divine impulse to embrace the profession of the sea, a mode of life, he observes, which produces an inclination to inquire into the mysteries of nature; and he had been gifted with a curious spirit, to read all kinds of chronicles, geographical treatises, and works of philosophy. In meditating upon these, his understanding had been opened by the Deity, "as with a palpable hand," so as to discover the navigation to the Indies, and he had been inflamed with ardor to undertake the enterprise. "Animated as by a heavenly fire," he adds, "I came to your highnesses: all who heard of my enterprise mocked at it; all the sciences I had acquired profited me nothing; seven years did I pass in your royal court, disputing the case with persons of great authority and learned in all the arts, and in the end they decided that all was vain. In your highnesses alone remained faith and constancy. Who will doubt that this light was from the holy Scriptures, illumining you as well as myself with rays of marvelous brightness?"

These ideas, so repeatedly, and solemnly, and artlessly expressed, by a man of the fervent piety of Columbus, show how truly his discovery arose from the working of his own mind, and not from information furnished by others. He considered it a divine intimation, a light from Heaven, and the fulfillment of what had been foretold by our Saviour and the prophets. Still he regarded it but as a minor event, preparatory to the great enterprise, the recovery of the holy sepulchre. He pronounced it a miracle effected by Heaven, to animate himself and others to that holy undertaking; and he assured the sovereigns that, if they had faith in his present as in his former proposition, they would assuredly be rewarded with equally triumphant success. He conjured them not to heed the sneers of such as might scoff at him as one unlearned, as an ignorant mariner, a worldly man; reminding them that the Holy Spirit works not merely in the learned, but also in the ignorant; nay, that it reveals things to come, not merely by rational beings, but by prodigies in animals, and by mystic signs in the air and in the heavens.

The enterprise here suggested by Columbus, however idle and extravagant it may appear in the present day, was in unison with the temper of the times, and of the court to which it was proposed. The vein of mystic erudition by which it was enforced, likewise, was suited to an age when the reveries of the cloister still controlled the operations of the cabinet and the camp. The spirit of the crusades had not yet passed away. In the cause of the church, and at the instigation of its dignitaries, every cavalier was ready to draw his sword; and religion mingled a glowing and devoted enthusiasm with the ordinary excitement of warfare. Ferdinand was a religious bigot; and the devotion of Isabella

went as near to bigotry as her liberal mind and magnanimous spirit would permit. Both the sovereigns were under the influence of ecclesiastical politicians, constantly guiding their enterprises in a direction to redound to the temporal power and glory of the church. The recent conquest of Granada had been considered a European crusade, and had gained to the sovereigns the epithet of Catholic. It was natural to think of extending their sacred victories still further, and retaliating upon the infidels their domination of Spain and their long triumphs over the cross. In fact, the Duke of Medina Sidonia had made a recent inroad into Barbary, in the course of which he had taken the city of Melilla, and his expedition had been pronounced a renewal of the holy wars against the infidels in Africa.*

There was nothing, therefore, in the proposition of Columbus that could be regarded as preposterous, considering the period and circumstances in which it was made, though it strongly illustrates his own enthusiastic and visionary character. It must be recollected that it was meditated in the courts of the Alhambra, among the splendid remains of Moorish grandeur, where, but a few years before, he had beheld the standard of the faith elevated in triumph above the symbols of infidelity. It appears to have been the offspring of one of those moods of high excitement, when, as has been observed, his soul was elevated by the contemplation of his great and glorious office; when he considered him-

* Garibay, Hist. España, lib. xix. cap. 6. Among the collections existing in the library of the late Prince Sebastian, there is a folio which, among other things, contains a paper or letter, in which is a calculation of the probable expenses of an army of twenty thousand men, for the conquest of the Holy Land. It is dated in 1509 or 1510, and the handwriting appears to be of the same time.

self under divine inspiration, imparting the will of Heaven, and fulfilling the high and holy purposes for which he had been predestined.*

* Columbus was not singular in this belief; it was entertained by many of his zealous and learned admirers. The erudite lapidary, Jayme Ferrer, in the letter written to Columbus in 1495, at the command of the sovereigns, observes: "I see in this a great mystery: the divine and infallible Providence sent the great St. Thomas from the west into the east, to manifest in India our holy and Catholic faith; and you, Señor, he sent in an opposite direction, from the east into the west, until you have arrived in the Orient, into the extreme part of Upper India that the people may hear that which their ancestors neglected of the preaching of St. Thomas. Thus shall be accomplished what was written, *in omnem terram exibit sonus eorum.*" * * * * * And again, "The office which you hold, Señor, places you in the light of an apostle and ambassador of God, sent by his divine judgment, to make known his holy name in unknown lands."—Letra de Mossen Jayme Ferrer, Navarrete Coleccion, tom. ii. decad. 68. See also the opinion expressed by Agostino Ginstiniani, his contemporary, in his Polyglot Psalter.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATIONS OF COLUMBUS FOR A FOURTH VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

[1501–1502.]

The speculation relative to the recovery of the holy sepulchre, held but a temporary sway over the mind of Columbus. His thoughts soon returned, with renewed ardor, to their wonted channel. He became impatient of inaction, and soon conceived a leading object for another enterprise of discovery. The achievement of Vasco de Gama, of the long-attempted navigation to India by the Cape of Good Hope, was one of the signal events of the day. Pedro Alvarez Cabral, following in his track, had made a most successful voyage, and returned with his vessels laden with the precious commodities of the East. The riches of Calicut were now the theme of every tongue, and the splendid trade now opened in diamonds and precious stones from the mines of Hindostan; in pearls, gold, silver, amber, ivory, and porcelain; in silken stuffs, costly woods, gums, aromatics, and spices of all kinds. The discoveries of the savage regions of the New World, as yet, brought little revenue to Spain; but this route, suddenly opened to the luxurious countries of the East, was pouring immediate wealth into Portugal.

Columbus was roused to emulation by these accounts. He now conceived the idea of a voyage, in which, with his usual enthusiasm, he hoped to surpass not merely the discovery of Vasco de Gama, but even those of his own previous expeditions. According to his own observations in his voyage to Paria, and the reports of other navigators, who had pursued the same route to a greater distance, it appeared that the coast of Terra Firma stretched far to the west. The southern coast of Cuba, which he considered a part of the Asiatic continent, stretched onwards towards the same point. The currents of the Caribbean sea must pass between those lands. He was persuaded, therefore, that there must be a strait existing somewhere thereabout, opening into the Indian sea. The situation in which he placed his conjectural strait, was somewhere about what at present is called the Isthmus of Darien.* Could he but discover such a passage, and thus link the New World he had discovered, with the opulent oriental regions of the old, he felt that he should make a magnificent close to his labors, and consummate this great object of his existence.

When he unfolded his plan to the sovereigns, it was listened to with great attention. Certain of the royal council, it is said, endeavored to throw difficulties in the way; observing that the various exigencies of the times, and the low state of the royal treasury, rendered any new expedition highly inexpedient. They intimated also that Columbus ought not to be employed, until his good conduct in Hispaniola was satisfactorily established by letters from Ovando. These narrow-minded suggestions failed in their aim: Isabella had implicit confidence in the integrity of

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 4. Las Casas specifies the vicinity of Nombre de Dios as the place.

Columbus. As to the expense, she felt that while furnishing so powerful a fleet and splendid retinue to Ovando, to take possession of his government, it would be ungenerous and ungrateful to refuse a few ships to the discoverer of the New World, to enable him to prosecute his illustrious enterprises. As to Ferdinand, his cupidity was roused at the idea of being soon put in possession of a more direct and safe route to those countries with which the crown of Portugal was opening so lucrative a trade. The project also would occupy the admiral for a considerable time, and, while it diverted him from claims of an inconvenient nature, would employ his talents in a way most beneficial to the crown. However the king might doubt his abilities as a legislator, he had the highest opinion of his skill and judgment as a navigator. If such a strait as the one supposed were really in existence, Columbus was, of all men in the world, the one to discover it. His proposition, therefore, was promptly acceded to; he was authorized to fit out an armament immediately; and repaired to Seville in the autumn of 1501, to make the necessary preparations.

Though this substantial enterprise diverted his attention from his romantic expedition for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, it still continued to haunt his mind. He left his manuscript collection of researches among the prophecies, in the hands of a devout friar of the name of Gaspar Gorricio, who assisted to complete it In February, also, he wrote a letter to Pope Alexander VII, in which he apologizes, on account of indispensable occupations, for not having repaired to Rome, according to his original intention, to give an account of his grand discoveries. After briefly relating them, he adds that his enterprises had been undertaken with intent of dedicating the gains to the recovery of the holy sepulchre. He mentions his vow to furnish, within seven

years, fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse for the purpose, and another of like force within five succeeding years. This pious intention, he laments, had been impeded by the arts of the devil, and he feared, without divine aid, would be entirely frustrated, as the government which had been granted to him in perpetuity had been taken from him. He informs his Holiness of his being about to embark on another voyage, and promises solemnly, on his return, to repair to Rome without delay, to relate every thing by word of mouth, as well as to present him with an account of his voyages, which he had kept from the commencement to the present time, in the style of the Commentaries of Cæsar.*

It was about this time, also, that he sent his letter on the subject of the sepulchre to the sovereigns, together with the collection of prophecies.† We have no account of the manner in

* Navarrete, Colec. Viag., tom. ii. p. 145.

† A manuscript volume containing a copy of this letter and of the collection of prophecies, is in the Columbian Library, in the Cathedral of Seville, where the author of this work has seen and examined it, since publishing the first edition. The title and some of the early pages of the work are in the handwriting of Fernando Columbus, the main body of the work is by a strange hand, probably by the Friar Gaspar Gorricio, or some brother of his Convent. There are trifling marginal notes or corrections, and one or two trivial additions in the handwriting of Columbus, especially a passage added after his return from his fourth voyage and shortly before his death, alluding to an eclipse of the moon which took place during his sojourn in the island of Jamaica. The handwriting of this last passage, like most of the manuscript of Columbus, which the author has seen, is small and delicate, but wants the firmness and distinctness of his earlier writing, his hand having doubtless become unsteady by age and infirmity.

This document is extremely curious as containing all the passages of Scripture and of the works of the fathers which had so powerful an influence on

which the proposition was received. Ferdinand, with all his bigotry, was a shrewd and worldly prince. Instead of a chivalrous crusade against Jerusalem, he preferred making a pacific arrangement with the Grand Soldan of Egypt, who had menaced the destruction of the sacred edifice. He dispatched, therefore, the learned Peter Martyr, so distinguished for his historical writings, as ambassador to the Soldan, by whom all ancient grievances between the two powers were satisfactorily adjusted, and arrangements made for the conservation of the holy sepulchre, and the protection of all Christian pilgrims resorting to it.

In the meantime Columbus went on with the preparations for his contemplated voyage, though but slowly, owing, as Charlevoix intimates, to the artifices and delays of Fonseca and his agents. He craved permission to touch at the island of Hispaniola for supplies on his outward voyage. This, however, the sovereigns forbade, knowing that he had many enemies in the island, and that the place would be in great agitation from the arrival of Ovando, and the removal of Bobadilla. They consented, however, that he should touch there briefly on his return, by which time they hoped the island would be restored to tranquillity. He was permitted to take with him, in this expedition, his brother the Adelantado, and his son Fernando, then in his fourteenth year; also two or three persons learned in Arabic, to serve as interpreters, in case he should arrive at the dominions of the Grand Khan, or of any other eastern prince where that language

the enthusiastic mind of Columbus, and were construed by him into mysterious prophecies and revelations. The volume is in good preservation, excepting that a few pages have been cut out. The writing, though of the beginning of the fifteenth century, is very distinct and legible. The library mark of the book is Estante Z. Tab. 138, No. 25.

might be spoken, or partially known. In reply to letters relative to the ultimate restoration of his rights, and to matters concerning his family, the sovereigns wrote him a letter, dated March 14, 1502, from Valencia de Torre, in which they again solemnly assured him that their capitulations with him should be fulfilled to the letter, and the dignities therein ceded enjoyed by him, and his children after him; and if it should be necessary to confirm them anew, they would do so, and secure them to his son. Beside which, they expressed their disposition to bestow further honors and rewards upon himself, his brothers, and his children. They entreated him, therefore, to depart in peace and confidence, and to leave all his concerns in Spain to the management of his son Diego.*

This was the last letter that Columbus received from the sovereigns, and the assurances it contained were as ample and absolute as he could desire. Recent circumstances, however, had apparently rendered him dubious of the future. During the time that he passed in Seville, previous to his departure, he took measures to secure his fame, and preserve the claims of his family, by placing them under the guardianship of his native country. He had copies of all the letters, grants, and privileges from the sovereigns, appointing him admiral, viceroy, and governor of the Indies, copied and authenticated before the alcaldes of Seville. Two sets of these were transcribed, together with his letter to the nurse of Prince Juan, containing a circumstantial and eloquent vindication of his rights; and two letters to the Bank of St. George, at Genoa, assigning to it the tenth of his revenues, to be employed in diminishing the duties on corn and other provisions;—a truly benevolent and patriotic donation,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind, lib. ii. cap. 4.

intended for the relief of the poor of his native city. These two sets of documents he sent by different individuals to his friend, Doctor Nicolo Oderigo, formerly ambassador from Genoa to the court of Spain, requesting him to preserve them in some safe deposit, and to apprise his son Diego of the same. His dissatisfaction at the conduct of the Spanish court may have been the cause of this precautionary measure, that an appeal to the world, or to posterity, might be in the power of his descendants, in case he should perish in the course of his voyage.*

* These documents lay unknown in the Oderigo family until 1670, when Lorenzo Oderigo presented them to the government of Genoa, and they were deposited in the archives. In the disturbances and revolutions of after times, one of these copies was taken to Paris, and the other disappeared. In 1816 the latter was discovered in the library of the deceased Count Michel Angelo Cambiaso, a senator of Genoa. It was procured by the King of Sardinia, then sovereign of Genoa, and given up by him to the city of Genoa in 1821. A custodia, or monument, was erected in that city for its preservation, consisting of a marble column supporting an urn, surmounted by a bust of Columbus. The documents were deposited in the urn. These papers have been published, together with an historical memoir of Columbus, by D. Gio. Battista Spotorno, Professor of Eloquence, &c., in the University of Genoa.

BOOK XV.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS FOURTH VOYAGE.—REFUSED ADMISSION TO THE HARBOR OF SAN DOMINGO.—EXPOSED TO A VIOLENT TEMPEST.

[1502.]

AGE was rapidly making its advances upon Columbus when he undertook his fourth and last voyage of discovery. He had already numbered sixty-six years, and they were years filled with care and trouble, in which age outstrips the march of time. His constitution, originally vigorous in the extreme, had been impaired by hardships and exposures in every clime, and silently preyed upon by the sufferings of the mind. His frame, once powerful and commanding, and retaining a semblance of strength and majesty even in its decay, was yet crazed by infirmities and subject to paroxysms of excruciating pain. His intellectual forces alone retained their wonted health and energy, prompting him, at a period of life when most men seek repose, to sally forth with youthful ardor, on the most toilsome and adventurous of expeditions.

His squadron for the present voyage consisted of four cara-

vels, the smallest of fifty tons burden, the largest not exceeding seventy, and the crews amounting in all to one hundred and fifty men. With this little armament and these slender barks did the venerable discoverer undertake the search after a strait, which, if found, must conduct him into the most remote seas, and lead to a complete circumnavigation of the globe.

In this arduous voyage, however, he had a faithful counselor, and an intrepid and vigorous coadjutor, in his brother Don Bartholomew, while his younger son Fernando cheered him with his affectionate sympathy. He had learnt to appreciate such comforts, from being too often an isolated stranger, surrounded by false friends and perfidious enemies.

The squadron sailed from Cadiz on the 9th of May, and passed over to Ercilla, on the coast of Morocco, where it anchored on the 13th. Understanding that the Portuguese garrison was closely besieged in the fortress by the Moors, and exposed to great peril, Columbus was ordered to touch there, and render all the assistance in his power. Before his arrival the siege had been raised, but the governor lay ill, having been wounded in an assault. Columbus sent his brother, the Adelantado, his son Fernando, and the captains of the caravels on shore, to wait upon the governor, with expressions of friendship and civility, and offers of the services of his squadron. Their visit and message gave high satisfaction, and several cavaliers were sent to wait upon the admiral in return, some of whom were relatives of his deceased wife, Doña Felippa Muñoz. After this exchange of civilities, the admiral made sail on the same day, and continued his voyage.* On the 25th of May, he arrived at the Grand Canary, and remained at that and the adjacent islands for a few days, taking in

* Hist de Almirante, cap. 88.

wood and water. On the evening of the 25th, he took his departure for the New World. The trade winds were so favorable, that the little squadron swept gently on its course, without shifting a sail, and arrived on the 15th of June at one of the Caribbee Islands, called by the natives Mantinino.* After stopping here for three days, to take in wood and water, and allow the seamen time to wash their clothes, the squadron passed to the west of the island, and sailed to Dominica, about ten leagues distant.† Columbus continued hence along the inside of the Antilles, to Santa Cruz, then along the south side of Porto Rico, and steered for San Domingo. This was contrary to the original plan of the admiral, who had intended to steer to Jamaica,‡ and thence to take a departure for the continent, and explore its coasts in search of the supposed strait. It was contrary to the orders of the sovereigns also, prohibiting him on his outward voyage to touch at Hispaniola. His excuse was, that his principal vessel sailed extremely ill, could not carry any canvas, and continually embarrassed and delayed the rest of the squadron.§ He wished, therefore, to exchange it for one of the fleet which had recently conveyed Ovando to his government, or to purchase some other vessel at San Domingo; and he was persuaded that he would not be blamed for departing from his orders, in a case of such importance to the safety and success of his expedition.

It is necessary to state the situation of the island at this mo-

* Señor Navarrete supposes this island to be the same at present called Santa Lucia. From the distance between it and Dominica, as stated by Fernando Columbus, it was more probably the present Martinica.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88.

‡ Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, tom. i.

§ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 5.

ment. Ovando had reached San Domingo on the 15th of April. He had been received with the accustomed ceremony on the shore, by Bobadilla, accompanied by the principal inhabitants of the town. He was escorted to the fortress, where his commission was read in form, in presence of all the authorities. The usual oaths were taken, and ceremonials observed; and the new governor was hailed with great demonstrations of obedience and satisfaction. Ovando entered upon the duties of his office with coolness and prudence; and treated Bobadilla with a courtesy totally opposite to the rudeness with which the latter had superseded Columbus. The emptiness of mere official rank, when unsustained by merit, was shown in the case of Bobadilla. The moment his authority was at an end, all his importance vanished. He found himself a solitary and neglected man, deserted by those whom he had most favored, and he experienced the worthlessness of the popularity gained by courting the prejudices and passions of the multitude. Still there is no record of any suit having been instituted against him; and Las Casas, who was on the spot, declares that he never heard any harsh thing spoken of him by the colonists.*

The conduct of Roldan and his accomplices, however, underwent a strict investigation, and many were arrested to be sent to Spain for trial. They appeared undismayed, trusting to the influence of their friends in Spain to protect them, and many relying on the well-known disposition of the Bishop of Fonseca to favor all who had been opposed to Columbus.

The fleet which had brought out Ovando, was now ready for sea; and was to take out a number of the principal delinquents, and many of the idlers and profligates of the island. Bobadilla

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 3.

was to embark in the principal ship, on board of which he put an immense amount of gold, the revenue collected for the crown during his government, and which he confidently expected would atone for all his faults. There was one solid mass of virgin gold on board of this ship, which is famous in the old Spanish chronicles. It had been found by a female Indian in a brook, on the estate of Francisco de Garay and Miguel Diaz, and had been taken by Bobadilla to send to the king, making the owners a suitable compensation. It was said to weigh three thousand six hundred castellanos.*

Large quantities of gold were likewise shipped in the fleet, by the followers of Roldan, and other adventurers; the wealth gained by the sufferings of the unhappy natives. Among the various persons who were to sail in the principal ship, was the unfortunate Guarionex, the once powerful cacique of the Vega. He had been confined in Fort Conception, ever since his capture after the war of Higuey, and was now to be sent a captive in chains to Spain. In one of the ships, Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the agent of Columbus, had put four thousand pieces of gold, to be remitted to him; being part of his property, either recently collected, or recovered from the hands of Bobadilla.†

The preparations were all made, and the fleet was ready to put to sea, when, on the 29th of June, the squadron of Columbus arrived at the mouth of the river. He immediately sent Pedro de Terreros, captain of one of the caravels, on shore, to wait on Ovando, and explain to him that the purpose of his coming was to procure a vessel in exchange for one of his caravels, which was extremely defective. He requested permission also to shelter his squadron in the harbor; as he apprehended, from various

* Las Casas, cap. 5. † Ib.

indications, an approaching storm. This request was refused by Ovando. Las Casas thinks it probable that he had instructions from the sovereigns not to admit Columbus, and that he was further swayed by prudent considerations, as San Domingo was at that moment crowded with the most virulent enemies of the admiral, many of them in a high state of exasperation, from recent proceedings which had taken place against them.*

When the ungracious refusal of Ovando was brought to Columbus, and he found all shelter denied him, he sought at least to avert the danger of the fleet, which was about to sail. He sent back the officer therefore to the governor, entreating him not to permit the fleet to put to sea for several days; assuring him that there were indubitable signs of an impending tempest. This second request was equally fruitless with the first. The weather, to an inexperienced eye, was fair and tranquil; the pilots and seamen were impatient to depart. They scoffed at the prediction of the admiral, ridiculing him as a false prophet, and they persuaded Ovando not to detain the fleet on so unsubstantial a pretext.

It was hard treatment of Columbus, thus to be denied the relief which the state of his ships required, and to be excluded in time of distress from the very harbor he had discovered. He retired from the river full of grief and indignation. His crew murmured loudly at being shut out from a port of their own nation, where even strangers, under similar circumstances, would be admitted. They repined at having embarked with a commander liable to such treatment; and anticipated nothing but evil from a voyage, in which they were exposed to the dangers of the sea, and repulsed from the protection of the land.

Being confident, from his observations of those natural phe-

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

nomena in which he was deeply skilled, that the anticipated storm could not be distant, and expecting it from the land side, Columbus kept his feeble squadron close to the shore, and sought for secure anchorage in some wild bay or river of the island.

In the meantime, the fleet of Bobadilla set sail from San Domingo, and stood out confidently to sea. Within two days, the predictions of Columbus were verified. One of those tremendous hurricanes, which sometimes sweep those latitudes, had gradually gathered up. The baleful appearance of the heavens, the wild look of the ocean, the rising murmur of the winds, all gave notice of its approach. The fleet had scarcely reached the eastern point of Hispaniola, when the tempest burst over it with awful fury, involving every thing in wreck and ruin. The ship on board of which were Bobadilla, Roldan, and a number of the most inveterate enemies of Columbus, was swallowed up with all its crew, and with the celebrated mass of gold, and the principal part of the ill-gotten treasure, gained by the miseries of the Indians. Many of the ships were entirely lost, some returned to San Domingo, in shattered condition, and only one was enabled to continue her voyage to Spain. That one, according to Fernando Columbus, was the weakest of the fleet, and had on board the four thousand pieces of gold, the property of the admiral.

During the early part of this storm, the little squadron of Columbus remained tolerably well sheltered by the land. On the second day the tempest increased in violence, and the night coming on with unusual darkness, the ships lost sight of each other and were separated. The admiral still kept close to the shore, and sustained no damage. The others, fearful of the land in such a dark and boisterous night, ran out for sea-room, and en-

countered the whole fury of the elements. For several days they were driven about at the mercy of wind and wave, fearful each moment of shipwreck, and giving up each other as lost. The Adelantado, who commanded the ship already mentioned as being scarcely sea-worthy, ran the most imminent hazard, and nothing but his consummate seamanship enabled him to keep her afloat. At length, after various vicissitudes, they all arrived safe at Port Hermoso, to the west of San Domingo. The Adelantado had lost his long boat; and all the vessels, with the exception of that of the admiral, had sustained more or less injury.

When Columbus learnt the signal destruction that had overwhelmed his enemies, almost before his eyes, he was deeply impressed with awe, and considered his own preservation as little less than miraculous. Both his son Fernando, and the venerable historian Las Casas, looked upon the event as one of those awful judgments, which seem at times to deal forth temporal retribution. They notice the circumstance, that while the enemies of the admiral were swallowed up by the raging sea, the only ship of the fleet which was enabled to pursue her voyage, and reach her port of destination, was the frail bark freighted with the property of Columbus. The evil, however, in this, as in most circumstances, overwhelmed the innocent as well as the guilty. In the ship with Bobadilla and Roldan, perished the captive Guarionex, the unfortunate cacique of the Vega.*

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. lib. ii. cap. 5. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88.

CHAPTER II.

VOYAGE ALONG THE COAST OF HONDURAS.

[1502.]

FOR several days Columbus remained in Port Hermoso to repair his vessels, and permit his crews to repose and refresh themselves after the late tempest. He had scarcely left this harbor, when he was obliged to take shelter from another storm in Jacquemel, or as it was called by the Spaniards, Port Brazil. Hence he sailed on the 14th of July, steering for Terra Firma. The weather falling perfectly calm, he was borne away by the currents until he found himself in the vicinity of some little islands near Jamaica,* destitute of springs, but where the seamen obtained a supply of water by digging holes in the sand on the beach.

The calm continuing, he was swept away to the group of small islands, or keys, on the southern coast of Cuba, to which, in 1494, he had given the name of The Gardens. He had scarcely touched there, however, when the wind sprang up from a favorable quarter, and he was enabled to make sail on his destined course. He now stood to the southwest, and after a few days discovered, on the 30th of July, a small but elevated island,

* Supposed to be the Morant Keys.

agreeable to the eye from the variety of trees with which it was covered. Among these was a great number of lofty pines, from which circumstance Columbus named it Isla de Pinos. It has always, however, retained its Indian name of Guanaja,* which has been extended to a number of smaller islands surrounding it. This group is within a few leagues of the coast of Honduras, to the east of the great bay or gulf of that name.

The Adelantado, with two launches full of people, landed on the principal island, which was extremely verdant and fertile. The inhabitants resembled those of other islands, excepting that their foreheads were narrower. While the Adelantado was on shore, he beheld a great canoe arriving, as from a distant and important voyage. He was struck with its magnitude and contents. It was eight feet wide, and as long as a galley, though formed of the trunk of a single tree. In the centre was a kind of awning or cabin of palm-leaves, after the manner of those in the gondolas of Venice, and sufficiently close to exclude both sun and rain. Under this sat a cacique with his wives and children. Twenty-five Indians rowed the canoe, and it was filled with all kinds of articles of the manufacture and natural production of the adjacent countries. It is supposed that this bark had come from the province of Yucatan, which is about forty leagues distant from this island.

The Indians in the canoe appeared to have no fear of the Spaniards, and readily went alongside of the admiral's caravel. Columbus was overjoyed at thus having brought to him at once, without trouble or danger, a collection of specimens of all the important articles of this part of the New World. He examined, with great curiosity and interest, the contents of the canoe. Among

* Called in some of the English maps Bonacca.

various utensils and weapons similar to those already found among the natives, he perceived others of a much superior kind. There were hatchets for cutting wood, formed not of stone but copper; wooden swords, with channels on each side of the blade, in which sharp flints were firmly fixed by cords made of the intestines of fishes; being the same kind of weapon afterwards found among the Mexicans. There were copper bells, and other articles of the same metal, together with a rude kind of crucible in which to melt it; various vessels and utensils neatly formed of clay, of marble, and of hard wood; sheets and mantles of cotton, worked and dyed with various colors; great quantities of cacao, a fruit as yet unknown to the Spaniards, but which, as they soon found, the natives held in great estimation, using it both as food and money. There was a beverage also extracted from maize or Indian corn, resembling beer. Their provisions consisted of bread made of maize, and roots of various kinds, similar to those of Hispaniola. From among these articles, Columbus collected such as were important to send as specimens to Spain, giving the natives European trinkets in exchange, with which they were highly satisfied. They appeared to manifest neither astonishment nor alarm when on board of the vessels, and surrounded by people who must have been so strange and wonderful to them. The women wore mantles, with which they wrapped themselves, like the female Moors of Granada, and the men had cloths of cotton round their loins. Both sexes appeared more particular about these coverings, and to have a quicker sense of personal modesty than any Indians Columbus had yet discovered.

These circumstances, together with the superiority of their implements and manufactures, were held by the admiral as indications that he was approaching more civilized nations. He endea-

vored to gain particular information from these Indians about the surrounding countries; but as they spoke a different language from that of his interpreters, he could understand them but imperfectly. They informed him that they had just arrived from a country, rich, cultivated, and industrious, situated to the west. They endeavored to impress him with an idea of the wealth and magnificence of the regions, and the people in that quarter, and urged him to steer in that direction. Well would it have been for Columbus had he followed their advice. Within a day or two he would have arrived at Yucatan; the discovery of Mexico and the other opulent countries of New Spain would have necessarily followed; the Southern Ocean would have been disclosed to him, and a succession of splendid discoveries would have shed fresh glory on his declining age, instead of its sinking amidst gloom, neglect, and disappointment.

The admiral's whole mind, however, was at present intent upon discovering the strait. As the countries described by the Indians lay to the west, he supposed that he could easily visit them at some future time, by running with the trade-winds along the coast of Cuba, which he imagined must continue on, so as to join them. At present he was determined to seek the main-land, the mountains of which were visible to the south, and apparently not many leagues distant:* by keeping along it steadfastly to the east, he must at length arrive to where he supposed it to be severed from the coast of Paria by an intervening strait; and passing through this, he should soon make his way to the Spice Islands and the richest parts of India.†

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete, tom. i.

† Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 20. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

He was encouraged the more to persist in his eastern course by information from the Indians, that there were many places in that direction which abounded with gold. Much of the information which he gathered among these people, was derived from an old man more intelligent than the rest, who appeared to be an ancient navigator of these seas. Columbus retained him to serve as a guide along the coast, and dismissed his companions with many presents.

Leaving the island of Guanaja, he stood southwardly for the main-land, and after sailing a few leagues, discovered a cape, to which he gave the name of Caxinas, from its being covered with fruit trees, so called by the natives. It is at present known as Cape Honduras. Here, on Sunday the 14th of August, the Adelantado landed with the captains of the caravels and many of the seamen, to attend mass, which was performed under the trees on the sea-shore, according to the pious custom of the admiral, whenever circumstances would permit. On the 17th, the Adelantado again landed at a river about fifteen miles from the point, on the bank of which he displayed the banners of Castile, taking possession of the country in the name of their Catholic Majesties; from which circumstances he named this the River of Possession.*

At this place they found upwards of a hundred Indians assembled, laden with bread and maize, fish and fowl, vegetables, and fruits of various kinds. These they laid down as presents before the Adelantado and his party, and drew back to a distance without speaking a word. The Adelantado distributed among them various trinkets, with which they were well pleased, and appeared the next day in the same place, in greater numbers, with still more abundant supplies of provisions.

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

The natives of this neighborhood, and for a considerable distance eastward, had higher foreheads than those of the islands. They were of different languages, and varied from each other in their decorations. Some were entirely naked; and their bodies were marked by means of fire with the figures of various animals. Some wore coverings about the loins; others short cotton jerkins without sleeves: some wore tresses of hair in front. The chieftains had caps of white or colored cotton. When arrayed for any festival, they painted their faces black, or with stripes of various colors, or with circles round the eyes. The old Indian guide assured the admiral that many of them were cannibals. In one part of the coast the natives had their ears bored, and hideously distended; which caused the Spaniards to call that region *la Costa de la Oreja*, or "the Coast of the Ear."*

From the River of Possession, Columbus proceeded along what is at present called the coast of Honduras, beating against contrary winds, and struggling with currents, which swept from the east like the constant stream of a river. He often lost in one tack what he had laboriously gained in two, frequently making but two leagues in a day, and never more than five. At night he anchored under the land, through fear of proceeding along an unknown coast in the dark, but was often forced out to sea by the violence of the currents.† In all this time he experienced the same kind of weather that had prevailed on the coast of Hispaniola, and had attended him more or less for upwards of sixty days. There was, he says, almost an incessant tempest of the heavens, with heavy rains, and such thunder and lightning, that it seemed as if the end of the world was at hand. Those who

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 90.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 90.

know any thing of the drenching rains, and rending thunder of the tropics, will not think his description of the storms exaggerated. His vessels were strained so that their seams opened; the sails and rigging were rent, and the provisions were damaged by the rain and by the leakage. The sailors were exhausted with labor, and harassed with terror. They many times confessed their sins to each other, and prepared for death. "I have seen many tempests," says Columbus, "but none so violent or of such long duration." He alludes to the whole series of storms for upwards of two months, since he had been refused shelter at San Domingo. During a great part of this time, he had suffered extremely from the gout, aggravated by his watchfulness and anxiety. His illness did not prevent his attending to his duties; he had a small cabin or chamber constructed on the stern, whence, even when confined to his bed, he could keep a look-out and regulate the sailing of the ships. Many times he was so ill that he thought his end approaching. His anxious mind was distressed about his brother the Adelantado, whom he had persuaded against his will to come on this expedition, and who was in the worst vessel of the squadron. He lamented also having brought with him his son Fernando, exposing him at so tender an age to such perils and hardships, although the youth bore them with the courage and fortitude of a veteran. Often, too, his thoughts reverted to his son Diego, and the cares and perplexities into which his death might plunge him.* At length, after struggling for upwards of forty days since leaving the Cape of Honduras, to make a distance of about seventy leagues, they arrived on the 14th of September at a cape where the coast making an angle, turned directly

* Letter from Jamaica. Navarrete Colec., tom. i.

south, so as to give them an easy wind and free navigation. Doubling the point, they swept off with flowing sails and hearts filled with joy; and the admiral, to commemorate this sudden relief from toil and peril, gave to the Cape the name of *Gracias a Dios*, or Thanks to God.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91.

CHAPTER III.

VOYAGE ALONG THE MOSQUITO COAST, AND TRANSACTIONS AT CARIARI.

[1503.]

AFTER doubling Cape Gracias a Dios, Columbus sailed directly south, along what is at present called the Mosquito shore. The land was of varied character, sometimes rugged, with craggy promontories and points stretching into the sea, at other places verdant and fertile, and watered by abundant streams. In the rivers grew immense reeds, sometimes of the thickness of a man's thigh: they abounded with fish and tortoises, and alligators basked on the banks. At one place Columbus passed a cluster of twelve small islands, on which grew a fruit resembling the lemon, on which account he called them the Limonares.*

After sailing about sixty-two leagues along this coast, being greatly in want of wood and water, the squadron anchored on the 16th of September, near a copious river, up which the boats were sent to procure the requisite supplies. As they were returning to their ships, a sudden swelling of the sea, rushing in and encountering the rapid current of the river, caused a violent com-

* P. Martyr, decad. iii. lib. iv. These may have been the lime, a small and extremely acid species of the lemon.

motion, in which one of the boats was swallowed up, and all on board perished. This melancholy event had a gloomy effect upon the crews, already dispirited and care-worn from the hardships they had endured, and Columbus, sharing their dejection, gave the stream the sinister name of *El rio del Desastre*, or the River of Disaster.*

Leaving this unlucky neighborhood, they continued for several days along the coast, until finding both his ships and his people nearly disabled by the buffetings of the tempests, Columbus, on the 25th of September, cast anchor between a small island and the main-land, in what appeared a commodious and delightful situation. The island was covered with groves of palm-trees, cocoanut-trees, bananas, and a delicate and fragrant fruit, which the admiral continually mistook for the mirabolane of the East Indies. The fruits and flowers, and odoriferous shrubs of the island sent forth grateful perfumes, so that Columbus gave it the name of La Huerta, or The Garden. It was called by the natives, Quiribiri. Immediately opposite, at a short league's distance, was an Indian village, named Cariari, situated on the bank of a beautiful river. The country around was fresh and verdant, finely diversified by noble hills and forests, with trees of such height, that Las Casas says they appeared to reach the skies.

When the inhabitants beheld the ships, they gathered together on the coast, armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, and lances, and prepared to defend their shores. The Spaniards, however, made no attempt to land during that or the succeeding day, but remained quietly on board repairing the ships, airing and drying the damaged provisons, or reposing from the fatigues of the voy-

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del. Almirante, cap. 91. Journal of Porras.

age. When the savages perceived that these wonderful beings, who had arrived in this strange manner on their coast, were perfectly pacific, and made no movement to molest them, their hostility ceased, and curiosity predominated. They made various pacific signals, waving their mantles like banners, and inviting the Spaniards to land. Growing still more bold, they swam to the ships, bringing off mantles and tunics of cotton, and ornaments of the inferior sort of gold called guanin, which they wore about their necks. These they offered to the Spaniards. The admiral, however, forbade all traffic, making them presents, but taking nothing in exchange, wishing to impress them with a favorable idea of the liberality and disinterestedness of the white men. The pride of the savages was touched at the refusal of their proffered gifts, and this supposed contempt for their manufactures and productions. They endeavored to retaliate, by pretending like indifference. On returning to shore, they tied together all the European articles which had been given them, without retaining the least trifle, and left them lying on the strand, where the Spaniards found them on a subsequent day.

Finding the strangers still declined to come on shore, the natives tried in every way to gain their confidence, and dispel the distrust which their hostile demonstrations might have caused. A boat approaching the shore cautiously one day, in quest of some safe place to procure water, an ancient Indian, of venerable demeanor, issued from among the trees, bearing a white banner on the end of a staff, and leading two girls, one about fourteen years of age, the other about eight, having jewels of guanin about their necks. These he brought to the boat and delivered to the Spaniards, making signs that they were to be detained as hostages while the strangers should be on shore. Upon this the

Spaniards sallied forth with confidence and filled their water-casks, the Indians remaining at a distance, and observing the strictest care, neither by word nor movement to cause any new distrust. When the boats were about to return to the ships, the old Indian made signs that the young girls should be taken on board, nor would he admit of any denial. On entering the ships the girls showed no signs of grief nor alarm, though surrounded by what to them must have been uncouth and formidable beings. Columbus was careful that the confidence thus placed in him should not be abused. After feasting the young females, and ordering them to be clothed and adorned with various ornaments, he sent them on shore. The night, however, had fallen, and the coast was deserted. They had to return to the ship, where they remained all night under the careful protection of the admiral. The next morning he restored them to their friends. The old Indian received them with joy, and manifested a grateful sense of the kind treatment they had experienced. In the evening, however, when the boats went on shore, the young girls appeared, accompanied by a multitude of their friends, and returned all the presents they had received, nor could they be prevailed upon to retain any of them, although they must have been precious in their eyes; so greatly was the pride of these savages piqued at having their gifts refused.

On the following day, as the Adelantado approached the shore, two of the principal inhabitants, entering the water, took him out of the boat in their arms, and carrying him to land, seated him with great ceremony on a grassy bank. Don Bartholomew endeavored to collect information from them respecting the country, and ordered the notary of the squadron to write down their replies. The latter immediately prepared pen, ink, and paper, and

proceeded to write; but no sooner did the Indians behold this strange and mysterious process, than mistaking it for some necromantic spell, intended to be wrought upon them, they fled with terror. After some time they returned, cautiously scattering a fragrant powder in the air, and burning some of it in such a direction, that the smoke should be borne towards the Spaniards by the wind. This was apparently intended to counteract any baleful spell, for they regarded the strangers as beings of a mysterious and supernatural order.

The sailors looked upon these counter-charms of the Indians with equal distrust, and apprehended something of magic; nay, Fernando Columbus, who was present, and records the scene, appears to doubt whether these Indians were not versed in sorcery, and thus led to suspect it in others.*

Indeed, not to conceal a foible, which was more characteristic of the superstition of the age than of the man, Columbus himself entertained an idea of the kind, and assures the sovereigns, in his letter from Jamaica, that the people of Cariari and its vicinity are great enchanters, and he intimates, that the two Indian girls who had visited his ship had magic powder concealed about their persons. He adds, that the sailors attributed all the delays and hardships experienced on that coast to their being under the influence of some evil spell, worked by the witchcraft of the natives, and that they still remained in that belief.†

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91. † Letter from Jamaica.

NOTE.—We find instances of the same kind of superstition in the work of Marco Polo, and as Columbus considered himself in the vicinity of the countries described by that traveler, he may have been influenced in this respect by his narrations. Speaking of the island of Soccotera (Socotra), Marco Polo

For several days the squadron remained at this place, during which time the ships were examined and repaired, and the crews enjoyed repose and the recreation of the land. The Adelantado, with a band of armed men, made excursions on shore to collect information. There was no pure gold to be met with here, all their ornaments were of guanin; but the natives assured the Adelantado, that, in proceeding along the coast, the ships would soon arrive at a country where gold was in great abundance.

In examining one of the villages, the Adelantado found, in a large house, several sepulchres. One contained a human body embalmed: in another, there were two bodies wrapped in cotton, and so preserved as to be free from any disagreeable odor. They were adorned with the ornaments most precious to them when living; and the sepulchres were decorated with rude carvings and paintings representing various animals, and, sometimes, what appeared to be intended for portraits of the deceased.* Throughout most of the savage tribes, there appears to have been great

observes: "The inhabitants deal more in sorcery and witchcraft than any other people, although forbidden by their archbishop, who excommunicates and anathematizes them for the sin. Of this, however, they make little account, and if any vessel belonging to a pirate should injure one of theirs, they do not fail to lay him under a spell, so that he cannot proceed on his cruise until he has made satisfaction for the damage; and even although he should have a fair and leading wind, they have the power of causing it to change, and thereby obliging him, in spite of himself, to return to the island. They can in like manner, cause the sea to become calm, and at their will can raise tempests, occasion shipwrecks, and produce many other extraordinary effects that need not be particularized.—Marco Polo, Book iii. cap. 35, Eng. translation by W. Marsden.

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91.

veneration for the dead, and an anxiety to preserve their remains undisturbed.

When about to sail, Columbus seized seven of the people, two of whom, apparently the most intelligent, he selected to serve as guides; the rest he suffered to depart. His late guide he had dismissed with presents at Cape Gracias a Dios. The inhabitants of Cariari manifested unusual sensibility at this seizure of their countrymen. They thronged the shore, and sent off four of their principal men with presents to the ships, imploring the release of the prisoners.

The admiral assured them that he only took their companions as guides, for a short distance along the coast, and would restore them soon in safety to their homes. He ordered various presents to be given to the ambassadors; but neither his promises nor gifts could soothe the grief and apprehension of the natives at beholding their friends carried away by beings of whom they had such mysterious apprehensions.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

CHAPTER IV

VOYAGE ALONG COSTA RICA.—SPECULATIONS CONCERNING THE ISTHMUS AT VERAGUA.

[1502.]

On the 5th of October, the squadron departed from Cariari, and sailed along what is at present called Costa Rica (or the Rich Coast), from the gold and silver mines found in after years among its mountains. After sailing about twenty-two leagues, the ships anchored in a great bay, about six leagues in length and three in breadth, full of islands, with channels opening between them, so as to present three or four entrances. It was called by the natives Caribaro,* and had been pointed out by the natives of Cariari as plentiful in gold.

The islands were beautifully verdant, covered with groves, and sent forth the fragrance of fruits and flowers. The channels between them were so deep and free from rocks that the ships sailed along them, as if in canals in the streets of a city, the spars and rigging brushing the overhanging branches of the trees. After anchoring, the boats landed on one of the islands,

* In some English maps this bay is called Almirante, or Carnabaco Bay. The channel by which Columbus entered is still called Boca del Almirante, or the Mouth of the Admiral.

where they found twenty canoes. The people were on shore among the trees. Being encouraged by the Indians of Cariari, who accompanied the Spaniards, they soon advanced with confidence. Here, for the first time on this coast, the Spaniards met with specimens of pure gold; the natives wearing large plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords; they had ornaments likewise of guanin, rudely shaped like eagles. One of them exchanged a plate of gold, equal in value to ten ducats, for three hawks'-bells.*

On the following day, the boats proceeded to the main-land at the bottom of the bay. The country around was high and rough, and the villages were generally perched on the heights. They met with ten canoes of Indians, their heads decorated with garlands of flowers, and coronets formed of the claws of beasts and the quills of birds;† most of them had plates of gold about their necks, but refused to part with them. The Spaniards brought two of them to the admiral to serve as guides. One had a plate of pure gold worth fourteen ducats, another an eagle worth twenty-two ducats. Seeing the great value which the strangers set upon this metal, they assured them it was to be had in abundance within the distance of two days' journey; and mentioned various places along the coast, whence it was procured, particularly Veragua, which was about twenty-five leagues distant.‡

The cupidity of the Spaniards was greatly excited, and they would gladly have remained to barter, but the admiral discouraged all disposition of the kind. He barely sought to collect specimens and information of the riches of the country, and then pressed

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete, tom. i. † P. Martyr, decad. iii. hb. v.
‡ Columbus's Letter from Jamaica.

forward in quest of the great object of his enterprise, the imaginary strait.

Sailing on the 17th of October, from this bay, or rather gulf, he began to coast this region of reputed wealth, since called the coast of Veragua; and after sailing about twelve leagues, arrived at a large river, which his son Fernando calls the Guaig. Here, on the boats being sent to land, about two hundred Indians appeared on the shore, armed with clubs, lances, and swords of palm-wood. The forests echoed with the sound of wooden drums, and the blasts of conch shells, their usual war signals. They rushed into the sea up to their waists, brandishing their weapons, and splashing the water at the Spaniards in token of defiance; but were soon pacified by gentle signs, and the intervention of the interpreters; and willingly bartered away their ornaments, giving seventeen plates of gold, worth one hundred and fifty ducats, for a few toys and trifles.

When the Spaniards returned the next day to renew their traffic, they found the Indians relapsed into hostility, sounding their drums and shells, and rushing forward to attack the boats. An arrow from a cross-bow, which wounded one of them in the arm, checked their fury, and on the discharge of a cannon, they fled with terror. Four of the Spaniards sprang on shore, pursuing and calling after them. They threw down their weapons, and came, awe-struck, and gentle as lambs, bringing three plates of gold, and meekly and thankfully receiving whatever was given in exchange.

Continuing along the coast, the admiral anchored in the mouth of another river, called the Catiba. Here likewise the sound of drums and conchs from among the forests, gave notice that the warriors were assembling. A canoe soon came off with two Indians, who, after exchanging a few words with the interpreters,

entered the admiral's ship with fearless confidence; and being satisfied of the friendly intentions of the strangers, returned to their cacique with a favorable report. The boats landed, and the Spaniards were kindly received by the cacique. He was naked like his subjects, nor distinguished in any way from them, except by the great deference with which he was treated, and by trifling attention paid to his personal comfort, being protected from a shower of rain by an immense leaf of a tree. He had a large plate of gold, which he readily gave in exchange, and permitted his people to do the same. Nineteen plates of pure gold were procured at this place. Here, for the first time in the New World, the Spaniards met with signs of solid architecture; finding a great mass of stucco, formed of stone and lime, a piece of which was retained by the admiral as a specimen,* considering it an indication of his approach to countries where the arts were in a higher state of cultivation.

He had intended to visit other rivers along this coast, but the wind coming on to blow freshly, he ran before it, passing in sight of five towns, where his interpreters assured him he might procure great quantities of gold. One they pointed out as Veragua, which has since given its name to the whole province. Here, they said, were the richest mines, and here most of the plates of gold were fabricated. On the following day, they arrived opposite a village called Cubiga, and here Columbus was informed that the country of gold terminated.† He resolved not to return to explore it, considering it as discovered, and its mines secured to the crown, and being anxious to arrive at the supposed strait, which he flattered himself could be at no great distance.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92. † Idem

In fact, during his whole voyage along the coast, he had been under the influence of one of his frequent delusions. From the Indians met with at the island of Guanaja, just arrived from Yucatan, he had received accounts of some great, and, as far as he could understand, civilized nation in the interior. This intimation had been corroborated, as he imagined, by the various tribes with which he had since communicated. In a subsequent letter to the sovereigns, he informs them that all the Indians of this coast concurred in extolling the magnificence of the country of Ciguare, situated at ten days' journey, by land, to the west. The people of that region wore crowns, and bracelets, and anklets of gold, and garments embroidered with it. They used it for all their domestic purposes, even to the ornamenting and embossing of their seats and tables. On being shown coral, the Indians declared that the women of Ciguare wore bands of it about their heads and necks. Pepper and other spices being shown them, were equally said to abound there. They described it as a country of commerce, with great fairs and sea-ports, in which ships arrived armed with cannon. The people were warlike also, armed like the Spaniards with swords, bucklers, cuirasses, and cross-bows, and they were mounted on horses. Above all, Columbus understood from them that the sea continued round to Ciguare, and that ten days beyond it was the Ganges.

These may have been vague and wandering rumors concerning the distant kingdoms of Mexico and Peru, and many of the details may have been filled up by the imagination of Columbus. They made, however, a strong impression on his mind. He supposed that Ciguare must be some province belonging to the Grand Khan, or some other eastern potentate, and as the sea reached it, he concluded it was on the opposite side of a peninsula: bearing

the same position with respect to Veragua that Fontarabia does with Tortosa in Spain, or Pisa with Venice in Italy. By proceeding farther eastward, therefore, he must soon arrive at a strait, like that of Gibraltar, through which he could pass into another sea, and visit this country of Ciguare, and, of course, arrive at the banks of the Ganges. He accounted for the circumstance of his having arrived so near to that river, by the idea which he had long entertained, that geographers were mistaken as to the circumference of the globe; that it was smaller than was generally imagined, and that a degree of the equinoctial line was but fifty-six miles and two-thirds.*

With these ideas Columbus determined to press forward, leaving the rich country of Veragua unexplored. Nothing could evince more clearly his generous ambition, than hurrying in this brief manner along a coast where wealth was to be gathered at every step, for the purpose of seeking a strait which, however it might produce vast benefit to mankind, could yield little else to himself than the glory of the discovery.

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

CHAPTER V.

DISCOVERY OF PUERTO BELLO AND EL RETRETE.—COLUMBUS ABANDONS THE SEARCH AFTER THE STRAIT.

[1502.]

On the 2d of November, the squadron anchored in a spacious and commodious harbor, where the vessels could approach close to the shore without danger. It was surrounded by an elevated country; open and cultivated, with houses within bow-shot of each other, surrounded by fruit-trees, groves of palms, and fields producing maize, vegetables, and the delicious pine-apple, so that the whole neighborhood had the mingled appearance of orchard and garden. Columbus was so pleased with the excellence of the harbor, and the sweetness of the surrounding country, that he gave it the name of Puerto Bello.* It is one of the few places along this coast which retain the appellation given by the illustrious discoverer It is to be regretted that they have so generally been discontinued, as they were so often records of his feelings, and of circumstances attending the discovery.

For seven days they were detained in this port by heavy rain and stormy weather. The natives repaired from all quarters in canoes, bringing fruits and vegetables and balls of cotton, but

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante.

there was no longer gold offered in traffic. The cacique, and seven of his principal chieftains, had small plates of gold hanging in their noses, but the rest of the natives appear to have been destitute of all ornaments of the kind. They were generally naked and painted red; the cacique alone was painted black.*

Sailing hence on the 9th of November, they proceeded eight leagues to the eastward, to the point since known as Nombre de Dios; but being driven back for some distance, they anchored in a harbor in the vicinity of three small islands. These, with the adjacent country of the main-land, were cultivated with fields of Indian corn, and various fruits and vegetables, whence Columbus called the harbor Puerto de Bastimentos, or Port of Provisions. Here they remained until the 23d, endeavoring to repair their vessels, which leaked excessively. They were pierced in all parts by the teredo or worm which abounds in the tropical seas. It is of the size of a man's finger, and bores through the stoutest planks and timbers, so as soon to destroy any vessel that is not well coppered. After leaving this port, they touched at another called Guiga, where above three hundred of the natives appeared on the shore, some with provisions, and some with golden ornaments, which they offered in barter. Without making any stay, however, the admiral urged his way forward; but rough and adverse winds again obliged him to take shelter in a small port, with a narrow entrance, not above twenty paces wide, beset on each side with reefs of rocks, the sharp points of which rose above the surface. Within, there was not room for more than five or six ships; yet the port was so deep, that they had no good anchorage, unless they approached near enough to the land for a man to leap on shore.

* Peter Martyr, dec. d. iii. lib. iv.

From the smallness of the harbor, Columbus gave it the name of *El Retrete*, or The Cabinet. He had been betrayed into this inconvenient and dangerous port by the misrepresentations of the seamen sent to examine it, who were always eager to come to anchor, and have communication with the shore.*

The adjacent country was level and verdant, covered with herbage, but with few trees. The port was infested with alligators, which basked in the sunshine on the beach, filling the air with a powerful and musky odor. They were timorous, and fled on being attacked, but the Indians affirmed that if they found a man sleeping on the shore they would seize and drag him into the water. These alligators Columbus pronounced to be the same as the crocodiles of the Nile. For nine days the squadron was detained in this port, by tempestuous weather. The natives of this place were tall, well proportioned, and graceful; of gentle and friendly manners, and brought whatever they possessed to exchange for European trinkets.

As long as the admiral had control over the actions of his people, the Indians were treated with justice and kindness, and every thing went on amicably. The vicinity of the ships to land, however, enabled the seamen to get on shore in the night without license. The natives received them in their dwellings with their accustomed hospitality; but the rough adventurers, instigated by avarice and lust, soon committed excesses that roused their generous hosts to revenge. Every night there were brawls and fights on shore, and blood was shed on both sides. The number of the Indians daily augmented by arrivals from the interior. They became more powerful and daring as they became more exaspera-

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

ted; and seeing that the vessels lay close to the shore, approached in a great multitude to attack them.

The admiral thought at first to disperse them by discharging cannon without ball, but they were not intimidated by the sound, regarding it as a kind of harmless thunder. They replied to it by yells and howlings, beating their lances and clubs against the trees and bushes in furious menace. The situation of the ships so close to the shore exposed them to assaults, and made the hostility of the natives unusually formidable. Columbus ordered a shot or two, therefore, to be discharged among them. When they saw the havoc made, they fled in terror, and offered no further hostility.*

The continuance of stormy winds from the east and the north-east, in addition to the constant opposition of the currents, disheartened the companions of Columbus, and they began to murmur against any further prosecution of the voyage. The seamen thought that some hostile spell was operating, and the commanders remonstrated against attempting to force their way in spite of the elements, with ships crazed and worm-eaten, and continually in need of repair. Few of his companions could sympathize with Columbus in his zeal for mere discovery. They were actuated by more gainful motives, and looked back with regret on the rich coast they had left behind, to go in search of an imaginary strait. It is probable that Columbus himself began to doubt the object of his enterprise. If he knew the details of the recent voyage of Bastides, he must have been aware that he had arrived from an opposite quarter to about the place where that navigator's exploring voyage from the east had terminated; consequently

* Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

that there was but little probability of the existence of the strait he had imagined.*

At all events, he determined to relinquish the further prosecution of his voyage eastward for the present, and to return to the coast of Veragua, to search for those mines of which he had heard so much, and seen so many indications. Should they prove equal to his hopes, he would have wherewithal to return to Spain in triumph, and silence the reproaches of his enemies, even though he should fail in the leading object of his expedition.

Here, then, ended the lofty anticipations which had elevated Columbus above all mercenary interests; which had made him regardless of hardships and perils, and given an heroic character to the early part of this voyage. It is true, he had been in pursuit of a mere chimera, but it was the chimera of a splendid imagination, and a penetrating judgment. If he was disappointed in his expectation of finding a strait through the Isthmus of Darien, it was because nature herself had been disappointed, for she appears to have attempted to make one, but to have attempted it in vain.

* It appears doubtful whether Columbus was acquainted with the exact particulars of that voyage, as they could scarcely have reached Spain previously to his sailing. Bastides had been seized in Hispaniola by Bobadilla, and was on board of that very fleet which was wrecked at the time that Columbus arrived off San Domingo. He escaped the fate that attended most of his companions and returned to Spain, where he was rewarded by the sovereigns for his enterprise. Though some of his seamen had reached Spain previous to the sailing of Columbus, and had given a general idea of the voyage, it is doubtful whether he had transmitted his papers and charts. Porras, in his journal of the voyage of Columbus, states that they arrived at the place where the discoveries of Bastides terminated; but this information he may have obtained subsequently at San Domingo.

CHAPTER VI.

RETURN TO VERAGUA.—THE ADELANTADO EXPLORES THE COUNTRY.

[1502.]

On the 5th of December, Columbus sailed from El Retrete, and relinquishing his course to the east, returned westward, in search of the gold mines of Veragua. On the same evening he anchored in Puerto Bello, about ten leagues distant; whence departing on the succeeding day, the wind suddenly veered to the west, and began to blow directly adverse to the new course he had adopted. For three months he had been longing in vain for such a wind, and now it came merely to contradict him. Here was a temptation to resume his route to the east, but he did not dare trust to the continuance of the wind, which, in these parts, appeared but seldom to blow from that quarter. He resolved, therefore, to keep on in the present direction, trusting that the breeze would soon change again to the eastward.

In a little while the wind began to blow with dreadful violence, and to shift about, in such manner as to baffle all seamanship. Unable to reach Veragua, the ships were obliged to put back to Puerto Bello, and when they would have entered that harbor, a sudden veering of the gale drove them from the land. For nine days they were blown and tossed about, at the mercy of

a furious tempest, in an unknown sea, and often exposed to the awful perils of a lee-shore. It is wonderful that such open vessels, so crazed and decayed, could outlive such a commotion of the elements. Nowhere is a storm so awful as between the tropics. The sea, according to the description of Columbus, boiled at times like a caldron; at other times it ran in mountain waves, covered with foam. At night the raging billows resembled great surges of flame, owing to those luminous particles which cover the surface of the water in these seas, and throughout the whole course of the Gulf Stream. For a day and night the heavens glowed as a furnace with the incessant flashes of lightning; while the loud claps of thunder were often mistaken by the affrighted mariners for signal guns of distress from their foundering companions. During the whole time, says Columbus, it poured down from the skies, not rain, but as it were a second deluge. The seamen were almost drowned in their open vessels. Haggard with toil and affright, some gave themselves over for lost; they confessed their sins to each other according to the rites of the Catholic religion, and prepared themselves for death; many, in their desperation, called upon death as a welcome relief from such overwhelming horrors. In the midst of this wild tumult of the elements, they beheld a new object of alarm. The ocean in one place became strangely agitated. The water was whirled up into a kind of pyramid or cone, while a livid cloud, tapering to a point, bent down to meet it. Joining together, they formed a vast column, which rapidly approached the ships, spinning along the surface of the deep, and drawing up the waters with a rushing sound. The affrighted mariners when they beheld this water-spout advancing towards them, despaired of all human means to avert it, and began to repeat passages from St.

John the evangelist. The water-spout passed close by the ships without injuring them, and the trembling mariners attributed their escape to the miraculous efficacy of their quotations from the Scriptures.*

In this same night, they lost sight of one of the caravels, and for three dark and stormy days gave it up for lost. At length, to their great relief, it rejoined the squadron, having lost its boat, and been obliged to cut its cable, in an attempt to anchor on a boisterous coast, and having since been driven to and fro by the storm. For one or two days, there was an interval of calm, and the tempest-tossed mariners had time to breathe. They looked upon this tranquillity, however, as deceitful, and, in their gloomy mood, beheld every thing with a doubtful and foreboding eye. Great numbers of sharks, so abundant and ravenous in these latitudes, were seen about the ships. This was construed into an evil omen; for among the superstitions of the seas, it is believed that these voracious fish can smell dead bodies at a distance; that they have a kind of presentiment of their prey; and keep about vessels which have sick persons on board, or which are in danger of being wrecked. Several of these fish they caught, using large hooks fastened to chains, and sometimes baited merely with a piece of colored cloth. From the maw of one they took out a living tortoise; from that of another the head of a shark, recently thrown from one of the ships; such is the indiscriminate voracity of these terrors of the ocean. Notwithstanding their superstitious fancies, the seamen were glad to use a part of these sharks for food, being very short of provisions. The length of the voyage had consumed the greater part of their sea-stores;

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 24. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 90.

the heat and humidity of the climate, and the leakage of the ships, had damaged the remainder, and their biscuit was so filled with worms, that, notwithstanding their hunger, they were obliged to eat it in the dark, lest their stomachs should revolt at its appearance.*

At length, on the 17th, they were enabled to enter a port resembling a great canal, where they enjoyed three days of repose. The natives of this vicinity built their cabins in trees, on stakes or poles laid from one branch to another. The Spaniards supposed this to be through the fear of wild beasts, or of surprisals from neighboring tribes; the different nations of these coasts being extremely hostile to one another. It may have been a precaution against inundations caused by floods from the mountains. After leaving this port, they were driven backwards and forwards, by the changeable and tempestuous winds, until the day after Christmas; when they sheltered themselves in another port, where they remained until the 3d of January, 1503, repairing one of the caravels, and procuring wood, water, and a supply of maize or Indian corn. These measures being completed, they again put to sea, and on the day of Epiphany, to their great joy, anchored at the mouth of a river called by the natives Yebra, within a league or two of the river Veragua, and in the country said to be so rich in mines. To this river, from arriving at it on the day of Epiphany, Columbus gave the name of Belen or Bethlehem.

For nearly a month he had endeavored to accomplish the voyage from Puerto Bello to Veragua, a distance of about thirty leagues; and had encountered so many troubles and adversities, from changeable winds and currents, and boisterous tempests, that he gave this intermediate line of sea-board the name of *La Costa de los Contrastes*, or The Coast of Contradictions.†

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 94. † Idem, cap. 94.

Columbus immediately ordered the mouths of the Belen, and of its neighboring river of Veragua, to be sounded. The latter proved too shallow to admit his vessels, but the Belen was somewhat deeper, and it was thought they might enter it with safety. Seeing a village on the banks of the Belen, the admiral sent the boats on shore to procure information. On their approach, the inhabitants issued forth with weapons in hand to oppose their landing, but were readily pacified. They seemed unwilling to give any intelligence about the gold mines; but, on being importuned, declared that they lay in the vicinity of the river of Veragua. To that river the boats were dispatched on the following day. They met with the reception so frequent along this coast, where many of the tribes were fierce and warlike, and are supposed to have been of Carib origin. As the boats entered the river, the natives sallied forth in their canoes, and others assembled in menacing style on the shores. The Spaniards, however, had brought with them an Indian of that coast, who put an end to this show of hostility by assuring his countrymen that the strangers came only to traffic with them.

The various accounts of the riches of these parts appeared to be confirmed by what the Spaniards saw and heard among these people. They procured in exchange for the veriest trifles twenty plates of gold, with several pipes of the same metal, and crude masses of ore. The Indians informed them that the mines lay among distant mountains; and that when they went in quest of it they were obliged to practice rigorous fasting and continence.*

* A superstitious notion with respect to gold appears to have been very prevalent among the natives. The Indians of Hispaniola observed the same privations when they sought for it, abstaining from food and from sexual intercourse. Columbus, who seemed to look upon gold as one of the sacred

The favorable report brought by the boats determined the admiral to remain in the neighborhood. The river Belen having the greatest depth, two of the caravels entered it on the 9th of January, and the two others on the following day at high tide, which on that coast does not rise above half a fathom.* The natives came to them in the most friendly manner, bringing great quantities of fish, with which that river abounded. They brought also golden ornaments to traffic; but continued to affirm that Veragua was the place whence the ore was procured.

The Adelantado, with his usual activity and enterprise, set off on the third day, with the boats well armed, to ascend the Veragua about a league and a half, to the residence of Quibian the principal cacique. The chieftain, hearing of his intention, met him near the entrance of the river, attended by his subjects, in several canoes. He was tall, of powerful frame, and warlike demeanor: the interview was extremely amicable. The cacique presented the Adelantado with the golden ornaments which he wore, and received as magnificent presents a few European trinkets. They parted mutually well pleased. On the following day Quibian visited the ships, where he was hospitably entertained by the admiral. They could only communicate by signs, and as the chieftain was of a taciturn and cautious character, the interview was not of long duration. Columbus made him several presents; the followers of the cacique exchanged many jewels of

and mystic treasures of the earth, wished to encourage similar observances among the Spaniards; exhorting them to purify themselves for the research of the mines by fasting, prayer, and chastity. It is scarcely necessary to add, that his advice was but little attended to by his rapacious and sensual followers.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

gold for the usual trifles, and Quibian returned, without much ceremony, to his home.

On the 24th of January, there was a sudden swelling of the river. The waters came rushing from the interior like a vast torrent; the ships were forced from their anchors, tossed from side to side, and driven against each other; the foremast of the admiral's vessel was carried away, and the whole squadron was in imminent danger of shipwreck. While exposed to this peril in the river, they were prevented from running out to sea by a violent storm, and by the breakers which beat upon the bar. This sudden rising of the river, Columbus attributed to some heavy fall of rain among a range of distant mountains, to which he had given the name of the mountains of San Christoval. The highest of these rose to a peak far above the clouds.*

The weather continued extremely boisterous for several days. At length, on the 6th of February, the sea being tolerably calm, the Adelantado, attended by sixty-eight men well armed, proceeded in the boats to explore the Veragua, and seek its reputed mines. When he ascended the river and drew near to the village of Quibian, situated on the side of a hill, the cacique came down to the bank to meet him, with a great train of his subjects, unarmed, and making signs of peace. Quibian was naked, and painted after the fashion of the country. One of his attendants drew a great stone out of the river, and washed and rubbed it carefully, upon which the chieftain seated himself as upon a throne.† He received the Adelantado with great courtesy; for the lofty, vigorous, and iron form of the latter, and his look of resolution and command, were calculated to inspire awe and re-

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 25. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

† Peter Martyr, decad. iii. lib. iv.

spect in an Indian warrior. The cacique, however was wary and politic. His jealousy was awakened by the intrusion of these strangers into his territories; but he saw the futility of any open attempt to resist them. He acceded to the wishes of the Adelantado, therefore, to visit the interior of his dominions, and furnished him with three guides to conduct him to the mines.

Leaving a number of his men to guard the boats, the Adelantado departed on foot with the remainder. After penetrating into the interior about four leagues and a half, they slept for the first night on the banks of a river, which seemed to water the whole country with its windings, as they had crossed it upwards of forty times. On the second day, they proceeded a league and a half farther, and arrived among thick forests, where their guides informed them the mines were situated. In fact, the whole soil appeared to be impregnated with gold. They gathered it from among the roots of the trees, which were of an immense height, and magnificent foliage. In the space of two hours each man had collected a little quantity of gold, gathered from the surface of the earth. Hence the guides took the Adelantado to the summit of a high hill, and showing him an extent of country as far as the eye could reach, assured him that the whole of it, to the distance of twenty days' journey westward, abounded in gold, naming to him several of the principal places.* The Adelantado gazed with enraptured eye over a vast wilderness of continued forest, where only here and there a bright column of smoke from amidst the trees, gave sign of some savage hamlet, or solitary wigwam, and the wild unappropriated aspect of this golden country delighted him more than if he had beheld it covered with towns and cities, and adorned with all the graces of cultivation. He

* Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.

returned with his party, in high spirits to the ships, and rejoiced the admiral with the favorable report of his expedition. It was soon discovered, however, that the politic Quibian had deceived them. His guides, by his instructions, had taken the Spaniards to the mines of a neighboring cacique with whom he was at war, hoping to divert them into the territories of his enemy. The real mines of Veragua, it was said, were nearer and much more wealthy.

The indefatigable Adelantado set forth again on the 16th of February, with an armed band of fifty-nine men, marching along the coast westward, a boat with fourteen men keeping pace with him. In this excursion he explored an extensive tract of country, and visited the dominions of various caciques, by whom he was hospitably entertained. He met continually with proofs of abundance of gold; the natives generally wearing great plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords. There were tracts of land, also, cultivated with Indian corn,—one of which continued for the extent of six leagues; and the country abounded with excellent fruits. He again heard of a nation in the interior, advanced in arts and arms, wearing clothing, and being armed like the Spaniards. Either these were vague and exaggerated rumors concerning the great empire of Peru, or the Adelantado had misunderstood the signs of his informants. He returned, after an absence of several days, with a great quantity of gold, and with animating accounts of the country. He had found no port, however, equal to the river of Belen, and was convinced that gold was nowhere to be met with in such abundance as in the district of Veragua.*

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 25. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

CHAPTER VII.

COMMENCEMENT OF A SETTLEMENT ON THE RIVER BELEN.—CONSPIRACY OF THE NATIVES.—EXPEDITION OF THE ADELANTADO TO SURPRISE QUIBIAN.

[1503.]

The reports brought to Columbus, from every side, of the wealth of the neighborhood; the golden tract of twenty days' journey in extent, shown to his brother from the mountain; the rumors of a rich and civilized country at no great distance, all convinced him that he had reached one of the most favored parts of the Asiatic continent. Again his ardent mind kindled up with glowing anticipations. He fancied himself arrived at a fountain-head of riches, at one of the sources of the unbounded wealth of King Solomon. Josephus, in his work on the antiquities of the Jews, had expressed an opinion, that the gold for the building of the temple of Jerusalem had been procured from the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus. Columbus supposed the mines of Veragua to be the same. They lay, as he observed, "within the same distance from the pole and from the line;" and if the information which he fancied he had received from the Indians was to be depended on, they were situated about the same distance from the Ganges.*

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

Here, then, it appeared to him, was a place at which to found a colony, and establish a mart that should become the emporium of a vast tract of mines. Within the two first days after his arrival in the country, as he wrote to the sovereigns, he had seen more signs of gold than in Hispaniola during four years. That island, so long the object of his pride and hopes, had been taken from him, and was a scene of confusion; the pearl coast of Paria was ravaged by mere adventurers; all his plans concerning both had been defeated; but here was a far more wealthy region than either, and one calculated to console him for all his wrongs and deprivations.

On consulting with his brother, therefore, he resolved immediately to commence an establishment here, for the purpose of securing the possession of the country, and exploring and working the mines. The Adelantado agreed to remain with the greater part of the people, while the admiral should return to Spain for reinforcements and supplies. The greatest dispatch was employed in carrying this plan into immediate operation. Eighty men were selected to remain. They were separated into parties of about ten each, and commenced building houses on a small eminence, situated on the bank of a creek, about a bow-shot within the mouth of the river Belen. The houses were of wood, thatched with the leaves of palm-trees. One larger than the rest was to serve as a magazine, to receive their ammunition, artillery, and a part of their provisions. The principal part was stored, for greater security, on board of one of the caravels, which was to be left for the use of the colony. It was true they had but a scanty supply of European stores remaining, consisting chiefly of biscuit, cheese, pulse, wine, oil, and vinegar; but the country produced bananas, plantains, pine-apples, cocoanuts, and other fruit. There was also

maize in abundance, together with various roots, such as were found in Hispaniola. The rivers and sea-coast abounded with fish. The natives, too, made beverages of various kinds. One from the juice of the pine-apple, having a vinous flavor; another from maize, resembling beer; and another from the fruit of a species of palm-tree.* There appeared to be no danger, therefore, of suffering from famine. Columbus took pains to conciliate the good will of the Indians, that they might supply the wants of the colony during his absence, and he made many presents to Quibian, by way of reconciling him to this intrusion into his territories.†

The necessary arrangements being made for the colony, and a number of the houses being roofed, and sufficiently finished for occupation, the admiral prepared for his departure, when an unlooked-for obstacle presented itself. The heavy rains which had so long distressed him during this expedition had recently ceased. The torrents from the mountains were over; and the river which had once put him to such peril by its sudden swelling, had now become so shallow, that there was not above half a fathom water on the bar. Though his vessels were small, it was impossible to draw them over the sands, which choked the mouth of the river, for there was a swell rolling and tumbling upon them, enough to dash his worm-eaten barks to pieces. He was obliged, therefore, to wait with patience, and pray for the return of those rains which he had lately deplored.

In the meantime, Quibian beheld, with secret jealousy and indignation, these strangers erecting habitations, and manifesting an intention of establishing themselves in his territories. He

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 96. † Letter from Jamaica.

was of a bold and warlike spirit, and had a great force of warriors at his command; and being ignorant of the vast superiority of the Europeans in the art of war, thought it easy, by a well-concerted artifice, to overwhelm and destroy them. He sent messengers round, and ordered all his fighting men to assemble at his residence on the river Veragua, under pretext of making war upon a neighboring province. Numbers of the warriors, in repairing to his head-quarters, passed by the harbor. No suspicions of their real design were entertained by Columbus or his officers; but their movements attracted the attention of the chief notary, Diego Mendez, a man of a shrewd and prying character, and zealously devoted to the admiral. Doubting some treachery, he communicated his surmises to Columbus, and offered to coast along in an armed boat to the river Veragua, and reconnoitre the Indian camp. His offer was accepted, and he sallied from the river accordingly, but had scarcely advanced a league, when he descried a large force of Indians on the shore. Landing alone, and ordering that the boat should be kept afloat, he entered among them. There were about a thousand armed and supplied with provisions, as if for an expedition. He offered to accompany them with his armed boat; his offer was declined with evident signs of impatience. Returning to his boat, he kept watch upon them all night, until seeing they were vigilantly observed, they returned to Veragua.

Mendez hastened back to the admiral, and gave it as his opinion that the Indians had been on their way to surprise the Spaniards. The admiral was loth to believe in such treachery, and was desirous of obtaining clearer information, before he took any step that might interrupt the apparently good understanding that existed with the natives. Mendez now undertook, with a

single companion, to penetrate by land to the head-quarters of Quibian, and endeavor to ascertain his intentions. Accompanied by one Rodrigo de Escobar, he proceeded on foot along the seaboard, to avoid the tangled forests, and arriving at the mouth of the Veragua, found two canoes with Indians, whom he prevailed on, by presents, to convey him and his companion to the village of the cacique. It was on the bank of the river; the houses were detached and interspersed among trees. There was a bustle of warlike preparation in the place, and the arrival of the two Spaniards evidently excited surprise and uneasiness. The residence of the cacique was larger than the others, and situated on a hill which rose from the water's edge. Quibian was confined to the house by indisposition, having been wounded in the leg by an arrow. Mendez gave himself out as a surgeon come to cure the wound: with great difficulty and by force of presents he obtained permission to proceed. On the crest of the hill and in front of the cacique's dwelling, was a broad, level, open place, round which, on posts, were the heads of three hundred enemies slain in battle. Undismayed by this dismal array, Mendez and his companion crossed the place toward the den of this grim warrior. A number of women and children about the door fled into the house with piercing cries. A young and powerful Indian, son to the cacique, sallied forth in a violent rage, and struck Mendez a blow which made him recoil several paces. The latter pacified him by presents and assurances that he came to cure his father's wound, in proof of which he produced a box of ointment. It was impossible, however, to gain access to the cacique, and Mendez returned with all haste to the harbor to report to the admiral what he had seen and learnt. It was evident there was a dangerous plot impending over the Spaniards, and as far as

Mendez could learn from the Indians who had taken him up the river in their canoe, the body of a thousand warriors which he had seen on his previous reconnoitering expedition, had actually been on a hostile enterprise against the harbor, but had given it up on finding themselves observed.

This information was confirmed by an Indian of the neighborhood, who had become attached to the Spaniards and acted as interpreter. He revealed to the admiral the designs of his countrymen, which he had overheard. Quibian intended to surprise the harbor at night with a great force, burn the ships and houses, and make a general massacre. Thus forewarned, Columbus immediately set a double watch upon the harbor. The military spirit of the Adelantado suggested a bolder expedient. The hostile plan of Quibian was doubtless delayed by his wound, and in the meantime he would maintain the semblance of friendship. The Adelantado determined to march at once to his residence, capture him, his family, and principal warriors, send them prisoners to Spain, and take possession of his village.

With the Adelantado, to conceive a plan was to carry it into immediate execution, and, in fact, the impending danger admitted of no delay. Taking with him seventy-four men, well armed, among whom was Diego Mendez, and being accompanied by the Indian interpreter who had revealed the plot, he set off on the 30th of March, in boats, to the mouth of the Veragua, ascended it rapidly, and before the Indians could have notice of his movements, landed at the foot of the hill on which the house of Quibian was situated.

Lest the cacique should take alarm and fly at the sight of a large force, he ascended the hill, accompanied by only five men, among whom was Diego Mendez; ordering the rest to come on,

with great caution and secrecy, two at a time, and at a distance from each other. On the discharge of an arquebuse, they were to surround the dwelling and suffer no one to escape.

As the Adelantado drew near to the house, Quibian came forth, and seating himself in the portal, desired the Adelantado to approach singly. Don Bartholomew now ordered Diego Mendez and his four companions to remain at a little distance, and when they should see him take the cacique by the arm, to rush immediately to his assistance. He then advanced with his Indian interpreter, through whom a short conversation took place, relative to the surrounding country. The Adelantado then adverted to the wound of the cacique, and pretending to examine it, took him by the arm. At the concerted signal four of the Spaniards rushed forward, the fifth discharged the arquebuse. The cacique attempted to get loose, but was firmly held in the iron grasp of the Adelantado. Being both men of great muscular power, a violent struggle ensued. Don Bartholomew, however, maintained the mastery, and Diego Mendez and his companions coming to his assistance, Quibian was bound hand and foot. At the report of the arquebuse, the main body of the Spaniards surrounded the house, and seized most of those who were within, consisting of fifty persons, old and young. Among these were the wives and children of Quibian, and several of his principal subjects. No one was wounded, for there was no resistance, and the Adelantado never permitted wanton bloodshed. When the poor savages saw their prince a captive, they filled the air with lamentations; imploring his release, and offering for his ransom a great treasure, which they said lay concealed in a neighboring forest.

The Adelantado was deaf to their supplications and their offers. Quibian was too dangerous a foe to be set at liberty; as

a prisoner, he would be a hostage for the security of the settlement. Anxious to secure his prize, he determined to send the cacique and the other prisoners on board of the boats, while he remained on shore with a part of his men to pursue the Indians who had escaped. Juan Sanchez, the principal pilot of the squadron, a powerful and spirited man, volunteered to take charge of the captives. On committing the chieftain to his care, the Adelantado warned him to be on his guard against any attempt at rescue or escape. The sturdy pilot replied that if the cacique got out of his hands, he would give them leave to pluck out his beard, hair by hair; with this vaunt he departed, bearing off Quibian bound hand and foot. On arriving at the boat, he secured him by a strong cord to one of the benches. It was a dark night. As the boat proceeded down the river, the cacique complained piteously of the painfulness of his bonds. The rough heart of the pilot was touched with compassion, and he loosened the cord by which Quibian was tied to the bench, keeping the end of it in his hand. The wily Indian watched his opportunity, and when Sanchez was looking another way, plunged into the water and disappeared. So sudden and violent was his plunge, that the pilot had to let go the cord, lest he should be drawn in after him. The darkness of the night, and the bustle which took place, in preventing the escape of the other prisoners, rendered it impossible to pursue the cacique, or even to ascertain his fate. Juan Sanchez hastened to the ships with the residue of the captives, deeply mortified at being thus outwitted by a savage.

The Adelantado remained all night on shore. The following morning, when he beheld the wild, broken, and mountainous nature of the country, and the scattered situation of the habitations perched on different heights, he gave up the search after the In

dians, and returned to the ships with the spoils of the cacique's mansion. These consisted of bracelets, anklets, and massive plates of gold, such as were worn round the neck, together with two golden coronets. The whole amounted to the value of three hundred ducats.* One fifth of the booty was set apart for the crown. The residue was shared among those concerned in the enterprise. To the Adelantado one of the coronets was assigned, as a trophy of his exploit.†

* Equivalent to one thousand two hundred and eighty-one dollars at the present day.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 98. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 27. Many of the particulars of this chapter are from a short narrative given by Diego Mendez, and inserted in his last will and testament. It is written in a strain of simple egotism, as he represents himself as the principal and almost the sole actor in every affair. The facts, however, have all the air of veracity, and being given on such a solemn occasion, the document is entitled to high credit. He will be found to distinguish himself on another hazardous and important occasion in the course of this history.—Vide Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISASTERS OF THE SETTLEMENT.

[1503.]

It was hoped by Columbus that the vigorous measure of the Adelantado would strike terror into the Indians of the neighborhood, and prevent any further designs upon the settlement. Quibian had probably perished. If he survived, he must be disheartened by the captivity of his family, and several of his principal subjects, and fearful of their being made responsible for any act of violence on his part. The heavy rains, therefore, which fall so frequently among the mountains of this isthmus, having again swelled the river, Columbus made his final arrangements for the management of the colony, and having given much wholesome counsel to the Spaniards who were to remain, and taken an affectionate leave of his brother, got under weigh with three of the caravels, leaving the fourth for the use of the settlement. As the water was still shallow at the bar, the ships were lightened of a great part of their cargoes, and towed out by the boats in calm weather, grounding repeatedly. When fairly released from the river, and their cargoes re-shipped, they anchored within a league of the shore, to await a favorable wind. It was the intention of the admiral to touch at Hispaniola,

on his way to Spain, and send thence supplies and reinforcements. The wind continuing adverse, he sent a boat on shore on the 6th of April, under the command of Diego Tristan, captain of one of the caravels, to procure wood and water, and make some communications to the Adelantado. The expedition of this boat proved fatal to its crew, but was providential to the settlement.

The cacique Quibian had not perished as some had supposed. Though both hands and feet were bound, yet in the water he was as in his natural element. Plunging to the bottom, he swam below the surface until sufficiently distant to be out of view in the darkness of the night, and then emerging made his way to shore. The desolation of his home, and the capture of his wives and children, filled him with anguish; but when he saw the vessels in which they were confined leaving the river, and bearing them off, he was transported with fury and despair. Determined on a signal vengeance, he assembled a great number of his warriors, and came secretly upon the settlement. The thick woods by which it was surrounded, enabled the Indians to approach unseen within ten paces. The Spaniards, thinking the enemy completely discomfited and dispersed, were perfectly off their guard. Some had strayed to the sea-shore, to take a farewell look at the ships; some were on board of the caravel in the river; others were scattered about the houses: on a sudden, the Indians rushed from their concealment with yells and howlings, launched their javelins through the roofs of palm-leaves, hurled them in at the windows, or thrust them through the crevices of the logs which composed the walls. As the houses were small, several of the inhabitants were wounded. On the first alarm, the Adelantado seized a lance, and sallied forth with seven or eight of his men. He was joined by Diego Mendez and several

of his companions, and they drove the enemy into the forest, killing and wounding several of them. The Indians kept up a brisk fire of darts and arrows from among the trees, and made furious sallies with their war-clubs; but there was no withstanding the keen edge of the Spanish weapons, and a fierce blood-hound being let loose upon them, completed their terror. They fled howling through the forest, leaving a number dead on the field, having killed one Spaniard, and wounded eight. Among the latter was the Adelantado, who received a slight thrust of a javelin in the breast.

Diego Tristan arrived in his boat during the contest, but feared to approach the land, lest the Spaniards should rush on board in such numbers as to sink him. When the Indians had been put to flight, he proceeded up the river in quest of fresh water, disregarding the warnings of those on shore, that he might be cut off by the enemy in their canoes.

The river was deep and narrow, shut in by high banks, and overhanging trees. The forests on each side were thick and impenetrable; so that there was no landing-place, excepting here and there where a footpath wound down to some fishing-ground, or some place where the natives kept their canoes.

The boat had ascended about a league above the village, to a part of the river where it was completely overshadowed by lofty banks and spreading trees. Suddenly, yells and war-whoops and blasts of conch-shells rose on every side. Light canoes darted forth in every direction from dark hollows, and overhanging thickets, each dextrously managed by a single savage, while others stood up brandishing and hurling their lances. Missiles were launched also from the banks of the river, and the branches of the trees. There were eight sailors in the boat, and three sol-

diers. Galled and wounded by darts and arrows, confounded by the yells and blasts of conchs, and the assaults which thickened from every side, they lost all presence of mind, neglected to use either oars or firearms, and only sought to shelter themselves with their bucklers. Diego Tristan had received several wounds; but still displayed great intrepidity, and was endeavoring to animate his men, when a javelin pierced his right eye, and struck him dead. The canoes now closed upon the boat, and a general massacre ensued. But one Spaniard escaped, Juan de Noya, a cooper of Seville. Having fallen overboard in the midst of the action, he dived to the bottom, swam under water, gained the bank of the river unperceived, and made his way down to the settlement, bringing tidings of the massacre of his captain and comrades.

The Spaniards were completely dismayed, were few in number, several of them were wounded, and they were in the midst of tribes of exasperated savages, far more fierce and warlike than those to whom they had been accustomed. The admiral being ignorant of their misfortunes, would sail away without yielding them assistance, and they would be left to sink beneath the overwhelming force of barbarous foes, or to perish with hunger on this inhospitable coast. In their despair they determined to take the caravel which had been left with them, and abandon the place altogether. The Adelantado remonstrated with them in vain; nothing would content them but to put to sea immediately. Here a new alarm awaited them. The torrents having subsided, the river was again shallow, and it was impossible for the caravel to pass over the bar. They now took the boat of the caravel, to bear tidings of their danger to the admiral, and implore him not to abandon them; but the wind was boisterous, a high sea was

rolling, and a heavy surf, tumbling and breaking at the mouth of the river, prevented the boat from getting out. Horrors increased upon them. The mangled bodies of Diego Tristan and his men came floating down the stream, and drifting about the harbor, with flights of crows, and other carrion birds, feeding on them, and hovering, and screaming, and fighting about their prey. The forlorn Spaniards contemplated this scene with shuddering; it appeared ominous of their own fate.

In the meantime the Indians, elated by their triumph over the crew of the boat, renewed their hostilities. Whoops and yells answered each other from various parts of the neighborhood. The dismal sound of conchs and war-drums in the deep bosom of the woods, showed that the number of the enemy was continually augmenting. They would rush forth occasionally upon straggling parties of Spaniards, and make partial attacks upon the houses. It was considered no longer safe to remain in the settlement, the close forest which surrounded it being a covert for the approaches of the enemy. The Adelantado chose, therefore, an open place on the shore at some distance from the wood. Here he caused a kind of bulwark to be made of the boat of the caravel, and of chests, casks, and similar articles. Two places were left open as embrasures, in which were placed a couple of falconets, or small pieces of artillery, in such a manner as to command the neighborhood. In this little fortress the Spaniards shut themselves up; its walls were sufficient to screen them from the darts and arrows of the Indians, but mostly they depended upon their firearms, the sound of which struck dismay into the savages, especially when they saw the effect of the balls, splintering and rending the trees around them, and carrying havoc to such a distance. The Indians were thus kept in check for the present, and

deterred from venturing from the forest; but the Spaniards, exhausted by constant watching and incessant alarms, anticipated all kinds of evil when their ammunition should be exhausted, or they should be driven forth by hunger to seek for food.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 98. Las Casas, lib. ii. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Relation of Diego Mendez, Navarrete, tom. i. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, tom i.

CHAPTER IX.

DISTRESS OF THE ADMIRAL ON BOARD OF HIS SHIP.—ULTIMATE RELIEF OF THE SETTLEMENT.

[1503.]

WHILE the Adelantado and his men were exposed to such imminent peril on shore, great anxiety prevailed on board of the ships. Day after day elapsed without the return of Diego Tristan and his party, and it was feared some disaster had befallen them. Columbus would have sent on shore to make inquiries; but there was only one boat remaining for the service of the squadron, and he dared not risk it in the rough sea and heavy surf. A dismal circumstance occurred to increase the gloom and uneasiness of the crews. On board of one of the caravels were confined the family and household of the cacique Quibian. It was the intention of Columbus to carry them to Spain, trusting that as long as they remained in the power of the Spaniards, their tribe would be deterred from further hostilities. They were shut up at night in the forecastle of the caravel, the hatchway of which was secured by a strong chain and padlock. As several of the crew slept upon the hatch, and it was so high as to be considered out of reach of the prisoners, they neglected to fasten the chain. The Indians discovered their negligence. Collecting a quantity of

stones from the ballast of the vessel, they made a great heap directly under the hatchway. Several of the most powerful warriors mounted upon the top, and bending their backs, by a sudden and simultaneous effort, forced up the hatch, flinging the seamen who slept upon it to the opposite side of the ship. In an instant the greater part of the Indians sprang forth, plunged into the sea, and swam for shore. Several, however, were prevented from sallying forth; others were seized on the deck, and forced back into the forecastle; the hatchway was carefully chained down, and a guard was set for the rest of the night. In the morning, when the Spaniards went to examine the captives, they were all found dead. Some had hanged themselves with the ends of ropes, their knees touching the floor; others had strangled themselves by straining the cords tight with their feet. Such was the fierce, unconquerable spirit of these people, and their horror of the white men.*

The escape of the prisoners occasioned great anxiety to the admiral, fearing they would stimulate their countrymen to some violent act of vengeance; and he trembled for the safety of his brother. Still this painful mystery reigned over the land. The boat of Diego Tristan did not return, and the raging surf prevented all communication. At length, one Pedro Ledesma, a pilot of Seville, a man of about forty-five years of age, and of great strength of body and mind, offered, if the boat would take him to the edge of the surf, to swim to shore, and bring off news. He had been piqued by the achievement of the Indian captives, in swimming to land at a league's distance, in defiance of sea and surf. "Surely," he said, "if they dare venture so much to procure their individual liberties, I ought to brave at least a part of

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 99

the danger, to save the lives of so many companions." His offer was gladly accepted by the admiral, and was boldly accomplished. The boat approached with him as near to the surf as safety would permit, where it was to await his return. Here, stripping himself, he plunged into the sea, and after buffeting for some time with the breakers, sometimes rising upon their surges, sometimes buried beneath them and dashed upon the sand, he succeeded in reaching the shore.

He found his countrymen shut up in their forlorn fortress, beleaguered by savage foes, and learnt the tragical fate of Diego Tristan and his companions. Many of the Spaniards, in their horror and despair, had thrown off all subordination, refused to assist in any measure that had in view a continuance in this place, and thought of nothing but escape. When they beheld Ledesma, a messenger from the ships, they surrounded him with frantic eagerness, urging him to implore the admiral to take them on board, and not abandon them on a coast where their destruction was inevitable. They were preparing canoes to take them to the ships, when the weather should moderate, the boat of the caravel being too small; and swore that, if the admiral refused to take them on board, they would embark in the caravel, as soon as it could be extricated from the river, and abandon themselves to the mercy of the seas, rather than remain upon that fatal coast.

Having heard all that his forlorn countrymen had to say, and communicated with the Adelantado and his officers, Ledesma set out on his perilous return. He again braved the surf and the breakers, reached the boat which was waiting for him, and was conveyed back to the ships. The disastrous tidings from the land filled the heart of the admiral with grief and alarm. To

leave his brother on shore, would be to expose him to the mutiny of his own men, and the ferocity of the savages. He could spare no reinforcement from his ships, the crews being so much weakened by the loss of Tristan and his companions. Rather than the settlement should be broken up, he would gladly have joined the Adelantado with all his people; but in such case how could intelligence be conveyed to the sovereigns of this important discovery, and how could supplies be obtained from Spain? There appeared no alternative, therefore, but to embark all the people, abandon the settlement for the present, and return at some future day, with a force competent to take secure possession of the country.* The state of the weather rendered the practicability even of this plan doubtful. The wind continued high, the sea rough, and no boat could pass between the squadron and the land. The situation of the ships was itself a matter of extreme solicitude. Feebly manned, crazed by storms, and ready to fall to pieces from the ravages of the teredo, they were anchored on a lee shore, with a boisterous wind and sea, in a climate subject to tempests, and where the least augmentation of the weather might drive them among the breakers. Every hour increased the anxiety of Columbus for his brother, his people, and his ships, and each hour appeared to render the impending dangers more imminent. Days of constant perturbation, and nights of sleepless anxiety, preyed upon a constitution broken by age, by maladies and hardships, and produced a fever of the mind, in which he was visited by one of those mental hallucinations deemed by him mysterious and supernatural. In a letter to the sovereigns he gives a solemn account of a kind of vision by which he was comforted in a dismal night, when full of despondency and tossing on a couch of pain:—

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

"Wearied and sighing," says he, "I fell into a slumber, when I heard a piteous voice saying to me, 'O fool, and slow to believe and serve thy God, who is the God of all! What did he more for Moses, or for his servant David, than he has done for thee? From the time of thy birth he has ever had thee under his peculiar care. When he saw thee of a fitting age he made thy name to resound marvelously throughout the earth, and thou wert obeyed in many lands, and didst acquire honorable fame among Christians. Of the gates of the Ocean Sea, shut up with such mighty chains, he delivered thee the keys; the Indies, those wealthy regions of the world, he gave thee for thine own, and empowered thee to dispose of them to others, according to thy pleasure. What did he more for the great people of Israel when he led them forth from Egypt? Or for David, whom, from being a shepherd, he made a king in Judea? Turn to him, then, and acknowledge thine error; his mercy is infinite. He has many and vast inheritances, yet in reserve. Fear not to seek them. Thine age shall be no impediment to any great undertaking. Abraham was above an hundred years when he begat Isaac; and was Sarah youthful? Thou urgest despondingly for succor. Answer! who hath afflicted thee so much, and so many times?—God, or the world? The privileges and promises which God hath made thee he hath never broken; neither hath he said, after having received thy services, that his meaning was different, and to be understood in a different sense. He performs to the very letter. He fulfills all that he promises, and with increase. Such is his custom. I have shown thee what thy Creator hath done for thee, and what he doeth for all. The present is the reward of the toils and perils thou hast endured in serving others.' I heard all this," adds Columbus, "as one almost dead, and had no p-

to reply to words so true, excepting to weep for my errors. Whoever it was that spake to me, finished by saying, 'Fear not! Confide! All these tribulations are written in marble, and not without cause.'"

Such is the singular statement which Columbus gave to the sovereigns of his supposed vision. It has been suggested that this was a mere ingenious fiction, adroitly devised by him to convey a lesson to his prince; but such an idea is inconsistent with his character. He was too deeply imbued with awe of the Deity, and with reverence for his sovereign, to make use of such an artifice. The words here spoken to him by the supposed voice, are truths which dwelt upon his mind, and grieved his spirit during his waking hours. It is natural that they should recur vividly and coherently in his feverish dreams; and in recalling and relating a dream one is unconsciously apt to give it a little coherency. Besides, Columbus had a solemn belief that he was a peculiar instrument in the hands of Providence, which, together with a deep tinge of superstition, common to the age, made him prone to mistake every striking dream for a revelation. He is not to be measured by the same standard with ordinary men in ordinary circumstances. It is difficult for the mind to realize his situation, and to conceive the exaltations of spirit to which he must have been subjected. The artless manner in which, in his letter to the sovereigns, he mingles up the rhapsodies and dreams of his imagination, with simple facts, and sound practical observations, pouring them forth with a kind of scriptural solemnity and poetry of language, is one of the most striking illustrations of a character richly compounded of extraordinary and apparently contradictory elements.

Immediately after this supposed vision, and after a duration

of nine days, the boisterous weather subsided, the sea became calm, and the communication with the land was restored. It was found impossible to extricate the remaining caravel from the river; but every exertion was made to bring off the people, and the property, before there should be a return of bad weather. In this, the exertions of the zealous Diego Mendez were eminently efficient. He had been for some days preparing for such an emergency. Cutting up the sails of the caravel, he made great sacks to receive the biscuit. He lashed two Indian canoes together with spars, so that they could not be overturned by the waves, and made a platform on them capable of sustaining a great burden. This kind of raft was laden repeatedly with the stores, arms, and ammunition, which had been left on shore, and with the furniture of the caravel, which was entirely dismantled. When well freighted, it was towed by the boat to the ships. In this way, by constant and sleepless exertions, in the space of two days, almost every thing of value was transported on board the squadron, and little else left than the hull of the caravel, stranded, decayed, and rotting in the river. Diego Mendez superintended the whole embarkation with unwearied watchfulness and activity. He, and five companions, were the last to leave the shore, remaining all night at their perilous post, and embarking in the morning with the last cargo of effects.

Nothing could equal the transports of the Spaniards, when they found themselves once more on board of the ships, and saw a space of ocean between them and those forests which had lately seemed destined to be their graves. The joy of their comrades seemed little inferior to their own; and the perils and hardships which yet surrounded them, were forgotten for a time in mutual congratulations. The admiral was so much impressed with a

sense of the high services rendered by Diego Mendez, throughout the late time of danger and disaster, that he gave him the command of the caravel, vacant by the death of the unfortunate Diego Tristan.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 99, 100. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 29. Relacion por Diego Mendez. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

CHAPTER X.

DEPARTURE FROM THE COAST OF VERAGUA.—ARRIVAL AT JAMAICA.—STRANDING OF THE SHIPS.

[1503.]

THE wind at length becoming favorable, Columbus set sail, towards the end of April, from the disastrous coast of Veragua. The wretched condition of the ships, the enfeebled state of the crews, and the scarcity of provisions, determined him to make the best of his way to Hispaniola, where he might refit his vessels and procure the necessary supplies for the voyage to Europe. To the surprise of his pilot and crews, however, on making sail, he stood again along the coast to the eastward, instead of steering north, which they considered the direct route to Hispaniola. They fancied that he intended to proceed immediately for Spain, and murmured loudly at the madness of attempting so long a voyage, with ships destitute of stores and consumed by the worms. Columbus and his brother, however, had studied the navigation of those seas with a more observant and experienced eye. They considered it advisable to gain a considerable distance to the east, before standing across for Hispaniola, to avoid being swept away, far below their destined port, by the strong currents setting

constantly to the west.* The admiral, however, did not impart his reasons to the pilots, being anxious to keep the knowledge of his routes as much to himself as possible, seeing that there were so many adventurers crowding into the field, and ready to follow on his track. He even took from the mariners their charts,† and boasts, in a letter to the sovereigns, that none of his pilots would be able to retrace the route to and from Veragua, nor to describe where it was situated.

Disregarding the murmurs of his men, therefore, he continued along the coast eastward as far as Puerto Bello. Here he was obliged to leave one of the caravels, being so pierced by worms, that it was impossible to keep her afloat. All the crews were now crowded into two caravels, and these were little better than mere wrecks. The utmost exertions were necessary to keep them free from water; while the incessant labor of the pumps bore hard on men enfeebled by scanty diet, and dejected by various hardships. Continuing onward, they passed Port Retrete, and a number of islands to which the admiral gave the name of Las Barbas, now termed the Mulatas, a little beyond Point Blas. Here he supposed that he had arrived at the province of Mangi in the territories of the Grand Khan, described by Marco Polo as adjoining to Cathay.‡ He continued on about ten leagues farther, until he approached the entrance of what is at present called the Gulf of Darien. Here he had a consultation with his captains and pilots, who remonstrated at his persisting in this struggle against contrary winds and currents, representing the lamentable plight of the ships, and the infirm state of the crews.§ Bidding

* Hist. del Almirante. Letter from Jamaica.

† Journal of Porras, Navarrete Colec., tom. i. ‡ Letter from Jamaica.

§ Testimony of Pedro de Ledesma. Pleito de los Colons.

farewell, therefore, to the main-land, he stood northward on the 1st of May, in quest of Hispaniola. As the wind was easterly, with a strong current setting to the west, he kept as near the wind as possible. So little did his pilots know of their situation, that they supposed themselves to the east of the Caribbee Islands, whereas the admiral feared that, with all his exertions, he should fall to the westward of Hispaniola.* His apprehensions proved to be well founded; for, on the 10th of the month, he came in sight of two small low islands to the northwest of Hispaniola, to which, from the great quantities of tortoises seen about them, he gave the name of the Tortugas; they are now known as the Caymans. Passing wide of these, and continuing directly north, he found himself, on the 30th of May, among the cluster of islands on the south side of Cuba, to which he had formerly given the name of the Queen's Gardens; having been carried between eight and nine degrees west of his destined port. Here he cast anchor near one of the Keys, about ten leagues from the main island. His crews were suffering excessively through scanty provisions and great fatigue; nothing was left of the sea-stores but a little biscuit, oil, and vinegar; and they were obliged to labor incessantly at the pumps, to keep the vessels afloat. They had scarcely anchored at these islands, when there came on, at midnight, a sudden tempest, of such violence, that, according to the strong expression of Columbus, it seemed as if the world would dissolve.† They lost three of their anchors almost immediately, and the caravel Bermuda was driven with such violence upon the ship of the admiral, that the bow of the one, and the stern of the other, were greatly shattered. The sea running high, and the wind being boisterous, the vessels chafed and injured each other dreadfully, and it was

* Letter from Jamaica. † Idem.

with great difficulty that they were separated. One anchor only remained to the admiral's ship, and this saved him from being driven upon the rocks; but at daylight the cable was found nearly worn asunder. Had the darkness continued an hour longer, he could scarcely have escaped shipwreck.*

At the end of six days, the weather having moderated, he resumed his course, standing eastward for Hispaniola: "his people," as he says, "dismayed and down-hearted; almost all his anchors lost, and his vessels bored as full of holes as a honeycomb." After struggling against contrary winds and the usual currents from the east, he reached Cape Cruz, and anchored at a village in the province of Macaca,† where he had touched in 1494, in his voyage along the southern coast of Cuba. Here he was detained by head winds for several days, during which he was supplied with cassava bread by the natives. Making sail again, he endeavored to beat up to Hispaniola; but every effort was in vain. The winds and currents continued adverse; the leaks continually gained upon his vessels, though the pumps were kept incessantly going, and the seamen even baled the water out with buckets and kettles. The admiral now stood, in despair, for the island of Jamaica, to seek some secure port; for there was imminent danger of foundering at sea. On the eve of St. John, the 23d of June, they put into Puerto Bueno, now called Dry Harbor, but met with none of the natives from whom they could obtain provisions, nor was there any fresh water to be had in the neighborhood. Suffering from hunger and thirst, they sailed eastward, on the following day, to another harbor, to which the

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 100. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.
† Hist. del Almirante. Journal of Porras.

admiral on his first visit to the island had given the name of Port Santa Gloria.

Here, at last, Columbus had to give up his long and arduous struggle against the unremitting persecution of the elements. His ships, reduced to mere wrecks, could no longer keep the sea, and were ready to sink even in port. He ordered them, therefore, to be run aground, within a bow-shot of the shore, and fastened together, side by side. They soon filled with water to the decks. Thatched cabins were then erected at the prow and stern for the accommodation of the crews, and the wreck was placed in the best possible state of defence. Thus castled in the sea, he trusted to be able to repel any sudden attack of the natives, and at the same time to keep his men from roving about the neighborhood and indulging in their usual excesses. No one was allowed to go on shore without especial license, and the utmost precaution was taken to prevent any offence being given to the Indians. Any exasperation of them might be fatal to the Spaniards in their present forlorn situation. A firebrand thrown into their wooden fortress might wrap it in flames, and leave them defenceless amidst hostile thousands.

BOOK XVI.

CHAPTER I.

ARRANGEMENT OF DIEGO MENDEZ WITH THE CACIQUES FOR SUPPLIES OF PROVISIONS.—SENT TO SAN DOMINGO BY COLUMBUS IN QUEST OF RELIEF.

[1503.]

THE island of Jamaica was extremely populous and fertile; and the harbor soon swarmed with Indians, who brought provisions to barter with the Spaniards. To prevent any disputes in purchasing or sharing these supplies, two persons were appointed to superintend all bargains, and the provisions thus obtained were divided every evening among the people. This arrangement had a happy effect in promoting a peaceful intercourse. The stores thus furnished, however, coming from a limited neighborhood of improvident beings, were not sufficient for the necessities of the Spaniards, and were so irregular as often to leave them in pinching want. They feared, too, that the neighborhood might soon be exhausted, in which case they should be reduced to famine. In this emergency, Diego Mendez stepped forward with his accustomed zeal, and volunteered to set off, with three men, on a foraging expedition about the island. His offer being gladly ac-

cepted by the admiral, he departed with his comrades well armed. He was every where treated with the utmost kindness by the natives. They took him to their houses, set meat and drink before him and his companions, and performed all the rites of savage hospitality. Mendez made an arrangement with the cacique of a numerous tribe, that his subjects should hunt and fish, and make cassava bread, and bring a quantity of provisions every day to the harbor. They were to receive, in exchange, knives, combs, beads, fish-hooks, hawks'-bells, and other articles, from a Spaniard, who was to reside among them for that purpose. The agreement being made, Mendez dispatched one of his comrades to apprise the admiral. He then pursued his journey three leagues farther, when he made a similar arrangement, and dispatched another of his companions to the admiral. Proceeding onward, about thirteen leagues from the ships, he arrived at the residence of another cacique, called Huarco, where he was generously entertained. The cacique ordered his subjects to bring a large quantity of provisions, for which Mendez paid him on the spot, and made arrangements for a like supply at stated intervals. He dispatched his third companion with this supply to the admiral, requesting, as usual, that an agent might be sent to receive and pay for the regular deliveries of provisions.

Mendez was now left alone, but he was fond of any enterprise that gave individual distinction. He requested of the cacique two Indians to accompany him to the end of the island; one to carry his provisions, and the other to bear the hammac, or cotton net in which he slept. These being granted, he pushed resolutely forward along the coast, until he reached the eastern extremity of Jamaica. Here he found a powerful cacique of the name of Ameyro. Mendez had buoyant spirits, great address, and an

ingratiating manner with the savages. He and the cacique became great friends, exchanged names, which is a kind of token of brotherhood, and Mendez engaged him to furnish provisions to the ships. He then bought an excellent canoe of the cacique, for which he gave a splendid brass basin, a short frock or cassock, and one of the two shirts which formed his stock of linen. The cacique furnished him with six Indians to navigate his bark, and they parted mutually well pleased. Diego Mendez coasted his way back, touching at the various places where he had made his arrangements. He found the Spanish agents already arrived at them, loaded his canoe with provisions, and returned in triumph to the harbor, where he was received with acclamations by his comrades, and with open arms by the admiral. The provisions he brought were a most seasonable supply, for the Spaniards were absolutely fasting; and thenceforward Indians arrived daily, well laden, from the marts which he had established.*

The immediate wants of his people being thus provided for, Columbus revolved, in his anxious mind, the means of getting from this island. His ships were beyond the possibility of repair, and there was no hope of any chance sail arriving to his relief, on the shores of a savage island, in an unfrequented sea. The most likely measure appeared to be, to send notice of his situation to Ovando, the governor at San Domingo, entreating him to dispatch a vessel to his relief. But how was this message to be conveyed? The distance between Jamaica and Hispaniola was forty leagues, across a gulf swept by contrary currents; there were no means of transporting a messenger, except in the light canoes of the savages; and who would undertake so hazardous a voyage in a frail bark of the kind? Suddenly the idea of Diego

* Relacion por Diego Mendez. Navarrete, tom. i.

Mendez, and the canoe he had recently purchased, presented itself to the mind of Columbus. He knew the ardor and intrepidity of Mendez, and his love of distinction by any hazardous exploit. Taking him aside, therefore, he addressed him in a manner calculated both to stimulate his zeal, and flatter his self-love. Mendez himself gives an artless account of this interesting conversation, which is full of character.

"Diego Mendez, my son," said the venerable admiral, "none of those whom I have here understand the great peril in which we are placed, excepting you and myself. We are few in number, and these savage Indians are many, and of fickle and irritable natures. On the least provocation they may throw firebrands from the shore, and consume us in our straw-thatched cabins. The arrangement which you have made with them for provisions, and which at present they fulfill so cheerfully, to-morrow they may break in their caprice, and may refuse to bring us any thing; nor have we the means to compel them by force, but are entirely at their pleasure. I have thought of a remedy, if it meets with your views. In this canoe, which you have purchased, some one may pass over to Hispaniola, and procure a ship, by which we may all be delivered from this great peril into which we have fallen. Tell me your opinion on the matter."

"To this," says Diego Mendez, "I replied: 'Señor, the danger in which we are placed, I well know, is far greater than is easily conceived. As to passing from this island to Hispaniola, in so small a vessel as a canoe, I hold it not merely difficult, but impossible; since it is necessary to traverse a gulf of forty leagues, and between islands where the sea is extremely impetuous, and seldom in repose. I know not who there is would adventure upon so extreme a peril.'"

Columbus made no reply, but from his looks and the nature of his silence, Mendez plainly perceived himself to be the person whom the admiral had in view; "Whereupon," continues he, "I added: 'Señor, I have many times put my life in peril of death to save you and all those who are here, and God has hitherto preserved me in a miraculous manner. There are, nevertheless, murmurers, who say that your Excellency intrusts to me all affairs wherein honor is to be gained, while there are others in your company who would execute them as well as I do. Therefore I beg that you would summon all the people, and propose this enterprise to them, to see if among them there is any one who will undertake it, which I doubt. If all decline it, I will then come forward and risk my life in your service, as I many times have done.'"*

The admiral gladly humored the wishes of the worthy Mendez, for never was simple egotism accompanied by more generous and devoted loyalty. On the following morning, the crew was assembled, and the proposition publicly made. Every one drew back at the thoughts of it, pronouncing it the height of rashness. Upon this, Diego Mendez stepped forward. "Señor," said he, "I have but one life to lose, yet I am willing to venture it for your service and for the good of all here present, and I trust in the protection of God, which I have experienced on so many other occasions."

Columbus embraced this zealous follower, who immediately set about preparing for his expedition. Drawing his canoe on shore, he put on a false keel, nailed weather-boards along the bow and stern, to prevent the sea from breaking over it;

* Relacion por Diego Mendez. Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

payed it with a coat of tar; furnished it with a mast and sail; and put in provisions for himself, a Spanish comrade, and six Indians.

In the meantime, Columbus wrote letters to Ovando, requesting that a ship might be immediately sent to bring him and his men to Hispaniola. He wrote a letter likewise to the sovereigns; for, after fulfilling his mission at San Domingo, Diego Mendez was to proceed to Spain on the admiral's affairs. In the letter to the sovereigns, Columbus depicted his deplorable situation, and entreated that a vessel might be dispatched to Hispaniola, to convey himself and his crew to Spain. He gave a comprehensive account of his voyage, most particulars of which have already been incorporated in this history, and he insisted greatly on the importance of the discovery of Veragua. He gave it as his opinion, that here were the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus, whence Solomon had derived such wealth for the building of the Temple. He entreated that this golden coast might not, like other places which he had discovered, be abandoned to adventurers, or placed under the government of men who felt no interest in the cause. "This is not a child," he adds, "to be abandoned to a step-mother. I never think of Hispaniola and Paria without weeping. Their case is desperate and past cure; I hope their example may cause this region to be treated in a different manner." His imagination becomes heated. He magnifies the supposed importance of Veragua, as transcending all his former discoveries; and he alludes to his favorite project for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre: "Jerusalem," he says, "and Mount Sion, are to be rebuilt by the hand of a Christian. Who is he to be? God, by the mouth of the Prophet, in the fourteenth Psalm,

declares it. The abbot Joachim* says that he is to come out of Spain." His thoughts then revert to the ancient story of the Grand Khan, who had requested that sages might be sent to instruct him in the Christian faith. Columbus, thinking that he had been in the very vicinity of Cathay, exclaims with sudden zeal, "Who will offer himself for this task? If our Lord permit me to return to Spain, I engage to take him there, God helping, in safety."

Nothing is more characteristic of Columbus than his earnest, artless, at times eloquent, and at times almost incoherent letters. What an instance of soaring enthusiasm and irrepressible enterprise is here exhibited! At the time that he was indulging in these visions, and proposing new and romantic enterprises, he was broken down by age and infirmities, racked by pain, confined to his bed, and shut up in a wreck on the coast of a remote and savage island. No stronger picture can be given of his situation, than that which shortly follows this transient glow of excitement; when with one of his sudden transitions of thought, he awakens, as it were, to his actual condition.

"Hitherto," says he, "I have wept for others; but now, have

* Joachim, native of the burgh of Celico, near Cozenza, traveled in the Holy Land. Returning to Calabria, he took the habit of the Cistercians in the monastery of Corazzo, of which he became prior and abbot, and afterwards rose to higher monastic importance. He died in 1202, having attained 72 years of age, leaving a great number of works; among the most known are commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Apocalypse. There are also prophecies by him, "which," (says the Dictionnaire Historique,) "during his life, made him to be admired by fools, and despised by men of sense; at present the latter sentiment prevails. He was either very weak or very presumptuous, to flatter himself that he had the keys of things of which God reserves the knowledge to himself."—Dict. Hist. tom. 5, Caen, 1785.

pity upon me, heaven, and weep for me, O earth! In my temporal concerns, without a farthing to offer for a mass; cast away here in the Indies; surrounded by cruel and hostile savages; isolated, infirm, expecting each day will be my last: in spiritual concerns, separated from the holy sacraments of the church, so that my soul, if parted here from my body, must be for ever lost! Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth and justice! I came not on this voyage to gain honor or estate, that is most certain, for all hope of the kind was already dead within me. I came to serve your majesties with a sound intention and an honest zeal, and I speak no falsehood. If it should please God to deliver me hence, I humbly supplicate your majesties to permit me to repair to Rome, and perform other pilgrimages."

The dispatches being ready, and the preparations of the canoe completed, Diego Mendez embarked, with his Spanish comrade and his six Indians, and departed along the coast to the eastward. The voyage was toilsome and perilous. They had to make their way against strong currents. Once they were taken by roving canoes of Indians, but made their escape, and at length arrived at the end of the island; a distance of thirty-four leagues from the harbor. Here they remained, waiting for calm weather to venture upon the broad gulf, when they were suddenly surrounded and taken prisoners by a number of hostile Indians, who carried them off a distance of three leagues, where they determined to kill them. Some dispute arose about the division of the spoils taken from the Spaniards, whereupon the savages agreed to settle it by a game of chance. While they were thus engaged, Diego Mendez escaped, found his way to his canoe, embarked in it, and returned alone to the harbor after fifteen days' absence. What became of his companions he does not mention, being seldom apt

to speak of any person but himself. This account is taken from the narrative inserted in his last will and testament.

Columbus, though grieved at the failure of his message, was rejoiced at the escape of the faithful Mendez. The latter, nothing daunted by the perils and hardships he had undergone, offered to depart immediately on a second attempt, provided he could have persons to accompany him to the end of the island, and protect him from the natives. This the Adelantado offered to undertake, with a large party well armed. Bartholomew Fiesco, a Genoese, who had been captain of one of the caravels, was associated with Mendez in this second expedition. He was a man of great worth, strongly attached to the admiral, and much esteemed by him. Each had a large canoe under his command, in which were six Spaniards and ten Indians—the latter were to serve as oarsmen. The canoes were to keep in company. On reaching Hispaniola, Fiesco was to return immediately to Jamaica, to relieve the anxiety of the admiral and his crew, by tidings of the safe arrival of their messenger. In the meantime, Diego Mendez was to proceed to San Domingo, deliver his letter to Ovando, procure and dispatch a ship, and then depart for Spain with a letter to the sovereigns.

All arrangements being made, the Indians placed in the canoes their frugal provision of cassava bread, and each his calabash of water. The Spaniards, beside their bread, had a supply of the flesh of utias, and each his sword and target. In this way they launched forth upon their long and perilous voyage, followed by the prayers of their countrymen.

The Adelantado, with his armed band, kept pace with them along the coast. There was no attempt of the natives to molest them, and they arrived in safety at the end of the island. Here

they remained three days before the sea was sufficiently calm for them to venture forth in their feeble barks. At length, the weather being quite serene, they bade farewell to their comrades, and committed themselves to the broad sea. The Adelantado remained watching them, until they became mere specks on the ocean, and the evening hid them from his view. The next day he set out on his return to the harbor, stopping at various villages on the way, and endeavoring to confirm the good-will of the natives.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 101.

CHAPTER II.

MUTINY OF PORRAS.

[1503.]

It might have been thought that the adverse fortune which had so long persecuted Columbus was now exhausted. The envy which had once sickened at his glory and prosperity could scarcely have devised for him a more forlorn heritage in the world he had discovered. The tenant of a wreck on a savage coast, in an untraversed ocean, at the mercy of barbarous hordes, who, in a moment, from precarious friends, might be transformed into ferocious enemies; afflicted, too, by excruciating maladies which confined him to his bed, and by the pains and infirmities which hardship and anxiety had heaped upon his advancing age. But he had not yet exhausted his cup of bitterness. He had yet to experience an evil worse than storm, or shipwreck, or bodily anguish, or the violence of savage hordes,—the perfidy of those in whom he confided.

Mendez and Fiesco had not long departed when the Spaniards in the wreck began to grow sickly, partly from the toils and exposures of the recent voyage, partly from being crowded in narrow quarters in a moist and sultry climate, and partly from want of their accustomed food, for they could not habituate themselves

to the vegetable diet of the Indians. Their maladies were rendered more insupportable by mental suffering, by that suspense which frets the spirit, and that hope deferred which corrodes the heart. Accustomed to a life of bustle and variety, they had now nothing to do but loiter about the dreary hulk, look out upon the sea, watch for the canoe of Fiesco, wonder at its protracted absence, and doubt its return. A long time elapsed, much more than sufficient for the voyage, but nothing was seen or heard of the canoe. Fears were entertained that their messenger had perished. If so, how long were they to remain here, vainly looking for relief which was never to arrive? Some sank into deep despondency, others became peevish and impatient. Murmurs broke forth, and, as usual with men in distress, murmurs of the most unreasonable kind. Instead of sympathizing with their aged and infirm commander, who was involved in the same calamity, who in suffering transcended them all, and yet who was incessantly studious of their welfare, they began to rail against him as the cause of all their misfortunes.

The factious feeling of an unreasonable multitude would be of little importance if left to itself, and might end in idle clamor; it is the industry of one or two evil spirits which generally directs it to an object, and makes it mischievous. Among the officers of Columbus were two brothers, Francisco and Diego de Porras. They were related to the royal treasurer Morales, who had married their sister, and had made interest with the admiral to give them some employment in the expedition.* To gratify the treasurer, he had appointed Francisco de Porras captain of one of the caravels, and had obtained for his brother Diego the situation of notary and accountant-general of the squadron. He had

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

treated them, as he declares, with the kindness of relatives, though both proved incompetent to their situations. They were vain and insolent men, and, like many others whom Columbus had benefited, requited his kindness with black ingratitude.*

These men, finding the common people in a highly impatient and discontented state, wrought upon them with seditious insinuations, assuring them that all hope of relief through the agency of Mendez was idle; it being a mere delusion of the admiral to keep them quiet, and render them subservient to his purposes. He had no desire nor intention to return to Spain; and in fact was banished thence. Hispaniola was equally closed to him, as had been proved by the exclusion of his ships from its harbor in a time of peril. To him, at present, all places were alike, and he was content to remain in Jamaica until his friends could make interest at court, and procure his recall from banishment. As to Mendez and Fiesco, they had been sent to Spain by Columbus on his own private affairs, not to procure a ship for the relief of his followers. If this were not the case, why did not the ships arrive, or why did not Fiesco return, as had been promised? Or if the canoes had really been sent for succor, the long time that had elapsed without tidings of them, gave reason to believe they had perished by the way. In such case, their only alternative would be, to take the canoes of the Indians and endeavor to reach Hispaniola. There was no hope, however, of persuading the admiral to such an undertaking; he was too old, and too helpless from the gout, to expose himself to the hardships of such a voyage. What then? were they to be sacrificed to his interests or his infirmities?—to give up their only chance for escape, and linger and

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego. Navarrete, Colec.

perish with him in this desolate wreck? If they succeeded in reaching Hispaniola, they would be the better received for having left the admiral behind. Ovando was secretly hostile to him, fearing that he would regain the government of the island; on their arrival in Spain, the bishop Fonseca, from his enmity to Columbus, would be sure to take their part; the brothers Porras had powerful friends and relatives at court, to counteract any representations that might be made by the admiral; and they cited the case of Roldan's rebellion, to show that the prejudices of the public, and of men in power, would always be against him. Nay, they insinuated that the sovereigns, who, on that occasion, had deprived him of part of his dignities and privileges, would rejoice at a pretext for stripping him of the remainder.*

Columbus was aware that the minds of his people were imbittered against him. He had repeatedly been treated with insolent impatience, and reproached with being the cause of their disasters. Accustomed, however, to the unreasonableness of men in adversity, and exercised, by many trials, in the mastery of his passions, he bore with their petulance, soothed their irritation, and endeavored to cheer their spirits by the hopes of speedy succor. A little while longer, and he trusted that Fiesco would arrive with good tidings, when the certainty of relief would put an end to all these clamors. The mischief, however, was deeper than he apprehended: a complete mutiny had been organized.

On the 2d of January, 1504, he was in his small cabin, on the stern of his vessel, being confined to his bed by the gout, which had now rendered him a complete cripple. While ruminating on his disastrous situation, Francisco de Porras suddenly entered. His abrupt and agitated manner betrayed the evil na-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

ture of his visit. He had the flurried impudence of a man about to perpetrate an open crime. Breaking forth into bitter complaints, at their being kept, week after week, and month after month, to perish piecemeal in that desolate place, he accused the admiral of having no intention to return to Spain. Columbus suspected something sinister from this unusual arrogance; he maintained, however, his calmness, and, raising himself in his bed, endeavored to reason with Porras. He pointed out the impossibility of departing until those who had gone to Hispaniola should send them vessels. He represented how much more urgent must be his desire to depart, since he had not merely his own safety to provide for, but was accountable to God and his sovereigns for the welfare of all who had been committed to his charge. He reminded Porras that he had always consulted with them all, as to the measures to be taken for the common safety, and that what he had done, had been with the general approbation; still, if any other measure appeared advisable, he recommended that they should assemble together, and consult upon it, and adopt whatever course appeared most judicious.

The measures of Porras and his comrades, however, were already concerted, and when men are determined on mutiny, they are deaf to reason. He bluntly replied, that there was no time for further consultations. "Embark immediately or remain in God's name, were the only alternatives." "For my part," said he, turning his back upon the admiral, and elevating his voice so that it resounded all over the vessel, "I am for Castile! those who choose may follow me!" shouts arose immediately from all sides, "I will follow you! and I! and I!" Numbers of the crew sprang upon the most conspicuous parts of the ship, brandishing weapons, and uttering mingled threats and cries of rebellion.

Some called upon Porras for orders what to do; others shouted "To Castile! to Castile!" while, amidst the general uproar, the voices of some desperadoes were heard menacing the life of the admiral.

Columbus, hearing the tumult, leaped from his bed, ill and infirm as he was, and tottered out of the cabin, stumbling and falling in the exertion, hoping by his presence to pacify the mutineers. Three or four of his faithful adherents, however, fearing some violence might be offered him, threw themselves between him and the throng, and taking him in their arms, compelled him to return to his cabin.

The Adelantado likewise sallied forth, but in a different mood. He planted himself, with lance in hand, in a situation to take the whole brunt of the assault. It was with the greatest difficulty that several of the loyal part of the crew could appease his fury, and prevail upon him to relinquish his weapon, and retire to the cabin of his brother. They now entreated Porras and his companions to depart peaceably, since no one sought to oppose them. No advantage could be gained by violence; but should they cause the death of the admiral, they would draw upon themselves the severest punishment from the sovereigns.*

These representations moderated the turbulence of the mutineers, and they now proceeded to carry their plans into execution. Taking ten canoes which the admiral had purchased of the Indians, they embarked in them with as much exultation as if certain of immediately landing on the shores of Spain. Others who had not been concerned in the mutiny, seeing so large a force departing, and fearing to remain behind, when so reduced

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 32. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

in number, hastily collected their effects, and entered likewise into the canoes. In this way forty-eight abandoned the admiral. Many of those who remained were only detained by sickness, for, had they been well, most of them would have accompanied the deserters.* The few who remained faithful to the admiral, and the sick, who crawled forth from their cabins, saw the departure of the mutineers with tears and lamentations, giving themselves up for lost. Notwithstanding his malady, Columbus left his bed, mingling among those who were loyal, and visiting those who were ill, endeavoring in every way to cheer and comfort them. He entreated them to put their trust in God, who would yet relieve them; and he promised, on his return to Spain, to throw himself at the feet of the queen, represent their loyalty and constancy, and obtain for them rewards that should compensate for all their sufferings.†

In the meantime, Francisco de Porras and his followers, in their squadron of canoes, coasted the island to the eastward, following the route taken by Mendez and Fiesco. Wherever they landed, they committed outrages upon the Indians, robbing them of their provisions, and of whatever they coveted of their effects. They endeavored to make their own crimes redound to the prejudice of Columbus, pretending to act under his authority, and affirming that he would pay for every thing they took. If he refused, they told the natives to kill him. They represented him as an implacable foe to the Indians; as one who had tyrannized over other islands, causing the misery and death of the natives, and who only sought to gain a sway here for the purpose of inflicting like calamities.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102. † Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 22.

Having reached the eastern extremity of the island, they waited until the weather should be perfectly calm, before they ventured to cross the gulf. Being unskilled in the management of canoes, they procured several Indians to accompany them. The sea being at length quite smooth, they set forth upon their voyage. Scarcely had they proceeded four leagues from land when a contrary wind arose, and the waves began to swell. They turned immediately for shore. The canoes, from their light structure, and being nearly round and without keels, were easily overturned, and required to be carefully balanced. They were now deeply freighted by men unaccustomed to them, and as the sea rose, they frequently let in the water. The Spaniards were alarmed, and endeavored to lighten them, by throwing overboard every thing that could be spared; retaining only their arms, and a part of their provisions. The danger augmented with the wind. They now compelled the Indians to leap into the sea, excepting such as were absolutely necessary to navigate the canoes. If they hesitated, they drove them overboard with the edge of the sword. The Indians were skillful swimmers, but the distance to land was too great for their strength. They kept about the canoes, therefore, taking hold of them occasionally to rest themselves and recover breath. As their weight disturbed the balance of the canoes, and endangered their overturning, the Spaniards cut off their hands, and stabbed them with their swords. Some died by the weapons of these cruel men, others were exhausted and sank beneath the waves; thus eighteen perished miserably, and none survived but such as had been retained to manage the canoes.

When the Spaniards got back to land, different opinions arose as to what course they should next pursue. Some were for

crossing to Cuba, for which island the wind was favorable. It was thought they might easily cross thence to the end of Hispaniola. Others advised that they should return and make their peace with the admiral, or take from him what remained of arms and stores, having thrown almost every thing overboard during their late danger. Others counseled another attempt to cross over to Hispaniola, as soon as the sea should become tranquil.

This last advice was adopted. They remained for a month at an Indian village near the eastern point of the island, living on the substance of the natives, and treating them in the most arbitrary and capricious manner. When at length the weather became serene, they made a second attempt, but were again driven back by adverse winds. Losing all patience, therefore, and despairing of the enterprise, they abandoned their canoes, and returned westward; wandering from village to village, a dissolute and lawless gang, supporting themselves by fair means or foul, according as they met with kindness or hostility, and passing like a pestilence through the island.*

* Hist. del Almirante cap. 102. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 32.

CHAPTER III.

SCARCITY OF PROVISIONS.—STRATAGEM OF COLUMBUS TO OBTAIN SUPPLIES FROM THE NATIVES.

[1504.]

While Porras and his crew were raging about with that desperate and joyless licentiousness which attends the abandonment of principle, Columbus presented the opposite picture of a man true to others and to himself, and supported, amidst hardships and difficulties, by conscious rectitude. Deserted by the healthful and vigorous portion of his garrison, he exerted himself to soothe and encourage the infirm and desponding remnant which remained. Regardless of his own painful maladies, he was only attentive to relieve their sufferings. The few who were fit for service were required to mount guard on the wreck, or attend upon the sick; there were none to forage for provisions. The scrupulous good faith and amicable conduct maintained by Columbus towards the natives had now their effect. Considerable supplies of provisions were brought by them from time to time, which he purchased at a reasonable rate. The most palatable and nourishing of these, together with the small stock of European biscuit that remained, he ordered to be appropriated to the sustenance of the infirm. Knowing how much the body is affected by the operations of the

mind, he endeavored to rouse the spirits, and animate the hopes, of the drooping sufferers. Concealing his own anxiety, he maintained a serene and even cheerful countenance, encouraging his men by kind words, and holding forth confident anticipations of speedy relief. By his friendly and careful treatment, he soon recruited both the health and spirits of his people, and brought them into a condition to contribute to the common safety. Judicious regulations, calmly, but firmly enforced, maintained every thing in order. The men became sensible of the advantages of wholesome discipline, and perceived that the restraints imposed upon them by their commander were for their own good, and ultimately productive of their own comfort.

Columbus had thus succeeded in guarding against internal ills, when alarming evils began to menace from without. The Indians, unused to lay up any stock of provisions, and unwilling to subject themselves to extra labor, found it difficult to furnish the quantity of food daily required for so many hungry men. The European trinkets, once so precious, lost their value, in proportion as they became common. The importance of the admiral had been greatly diminished by the desertion of so many of his followers; and the malignant instigations of the rebels had awakened jealousy and enmity in several of the villages, which had been accustomed to furnish provisions.

By degrees, therefore, the supplies fell off. The arrangements for the daily delivery of certain quantities, made by Diego Mendez, were irregularly attended to, and at length ceased entirely. The Indians no longer thronged to the harbor with provisions, and often refused them when applied for. The Spaniards were obliged to forage about the neighborhood for their daily food; but found more and more difficulty in procuring it; thus,

in addition to their other causes for despondency, they began to entertain horrible apprehensions of famine.

The admiral heard their melancholy forebodings, and beheld the growing evil, but was at a loss for a remedy. To resort to force was an alternative full of danger, and of but temporary efficacy. It would require all those who were well enough to bear arms to sally forth, while he and the rest of the infirm would be left defenceless on board of the wreck, exposed to the vengeance of the natives.

In the meantime, the scarcity daily increased. The Indians perceived the wants of the white men, and had learnt from them the art of making bargains. They asked ten times the former quantity of European articles for any amount of provisions, and brought their supplies in scanty quantities, to enhance the eagerness of the hungry Spaniards. At length, even this relief ceased, and there was an absolute distress for food. The jealousy of the natives had been universally roused by Porras and his followers, and they withheld all provisions, in hopes either of starving the admiral and his people, or of driving them from the island.

In this extremity, a fortunate idea presented itself to Columbus. From his knowledge of astronomy, he ascertained that, within three days, there would be a total eclipse of the moon in the early part of the night. He sent, therefore, an Indian of Hispaniola, who served as his interpreter, to summon the principal caciques to a grand conference, appointing for it the day of the eclipse. When all were assembled, he told them by his interpreter, that he and his followers were worshipers of a Deity who dwelt in the skies; who favored such as did well, but punished all transgressors. That, as they must all have noticed, he had protected Diego Mendez and his companions in their voyage,

because they went in obedience to the orders of their commander; but had visited Porras and his companions with all kinds of afflictions, in consequence of their rebellion. This great Deity, he added, was incensed against the Indians who refused to furnish his faithful worshipers with provisions, and intended to chastise them with famine and pestilence. Lest they should disbelieve this warning, a signal would be given that night. They would behold the moon change its color, and gradually lose its light; a token of the fearful punishment which awaited them.

Many of the Indians were alarmed at the prediction, others treated it with derision,—all, however, awaited with solicitude the coming of the night. When they beheld a dark shadow stealing over the moon, they began to tremble; with the progress of the eclipse their fears increased, and when they saw a mysterious darkness covering the whole face of nature, there were no bounds to their terror. Seizing upon whatever provisions were at hand, they hurried to the ships, threw themselves at the feet of Columbus, and implored him to intercede with his God to withhold the threatened calamities, assuring him they would thenceforth bring him whatever he required. Columbus shut himself up in his cabin, as if to commune with the Deity, and remained there during the increase of the eclipse, the forests and shores all the while resounding with the howlings and supplications of the savages. When the eclipse was about to diminish, he came forth and informed the natives that his God had deigned to pardon them, on condition of their fulfilling their promises; in sign of which he would withdraw the darkness from the moon.

When the Indians saw that planet restored to its brightness, and rolling in all its beauty through the firmament, they overwhelmed the admiral with thanks for his intercession, and repaired

to their homes, joyful at having escaped such great disasters. Regarding Columbus with awe and reverence, as a man in the peculiar favor and confidence of the Deity, since he knew upon earth what was passing in the heavens, they hastened to propitiate him with gifts; supplies again arrived daily at the harbor, and from that time forward, there was no want of provisions.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 103. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 33.

CHAPTER IV

MISSION OF DIEGO DE ESCOBAR TO THE ADMIRAL.

[1504.]

EIGHT months had now elapsed since the departure of Mendez and Fiesco, without any tidings of their fate. For a long time the Spaniards had kept a wistful look-out upon the ocean, flattering themselves that every Indian canoe, gliding at a distance, might be the harbinger of deliverance. The hopes of the most sanguine were now fast sinking into despondency. What thousand perils awaited such frail barks, and so weak a party, on an expedition of the kind! Either the canoes had been swallowed up by boisterous waves and adverse currents, or their crews had perished among the rugged mountains and savage tribes of Hispaniola. To increase their despondency, they were informed that a vessel had been seen, bottom upwards, drifting with the currents along the coasts of Jamaica. This might be the vessel sent to their relief; and if so, all their hopes were shipwrecked with it. This rumor, it is affirmed, was invented and circulated in the island by the rebels, that it might reach the ears of those who remained faithful to the admiral, and reduce them to despair.* It no doubt had its effect. Losing all hope of aid from a distance,

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 104.

and considering themselves abandoned and forgotten by the world, many grew wild and desperate in their plans. Another conspiracy was formed by one Bernardo, an apothecary of Valencia, with two confederates, Alonzo de Zamora and Pedro de Villatoro. They designed to seize upon the remaining canoes, and seek their way to Hispaniola.*

The mutiny was on the very point of breaking out, when one evening, towards dusk, a sail was seen standing towards the harbor. The transports of the poor Spaniards may be more easily conceived than described. The vessel was of small size; it kept out to sea, but sent its boat to visit the ships. Every eye was eagerly bent to hail the countenances of Christians and deliverers. As the boat approached, they descried in it Diego de Escobar, a man who had been one of the most active confederates of Roldan in his rebellion, who had been condemned to death under the administration of Columbus, and pardoned by his successor Bobadilla. There was bad omen in such a messenger.

Coming alongside of the ships, Escobar put a letter on board from Ovando, governor of Hispaniola, together with a barrel of wine and a side of bacon, sent as presents to the admiral. He then drew off, and talked with Columbus from a distance. He told him that he was sent by the governor to express his great concern at his misfortunes, and his regret at not having in port a vessel of sufficient size to bring off himself and his people, but that he would send one as soon as possible. Escobar gave the admiral assurances likewise, that his concerns in Hispaniola had been faithfully attended to. He requested him, if he had any letter to write to the governor in reply, to give it to him as soon as possible, as he wished to return immediately.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 33.

There was something extremely singular in this mission, but there was no time for comments, Escobar was urgent to depart. Columbus hastened, therefore, to write a reply to Ovando, depicting the dangers and distresses of his situation, increased as they were by the rebellion of Porras, but expressing his reliance on his promise to send him relief, confiding in which he should remain patiently on board of his wreck. He recommended Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco to his favor, assuring him that they were not sent to San Domingo with any artful design, but simply to represent his perilous situation, and to apply for succor.* When Escobar received this letter, he returned immediately on board of his vessel, which made all sail, and soon disappeared in the gathering gloom of the night.

If the Spaniards had hailed the arrival of this vessel with transport, its sudden departure and the mysterious conduct of Escobar inspired no less wonder and consternation. He had kept aloof from all communication with them, as if he felt no interest in their welfare, or sympathy in their misfortunes. Columbus saw the gloom that had gathered in their countenances, and feared the consequences. He eagerly sought, therefore, to dispel their suspicions, professing himself satisfied with the communications received from Ovando, and assuring them that vessels would soon arrive to take them all away. In confidence of this, he said, he had declined to depart with Escobar, because his vessel was too small to take the whole, preferring to remain with them and share their lot, and had dispatched the caravel in such haste that no time might be lost in expediting the necessary ships. These assurances, and the certainty that their situation was known in San Domingo, cheered the hearts of the people. Their hopes again

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 34.

revived, and the conspiracy, which had been on the point of breaking forth, was completely disconcerted.

In secret, however, Columbus was exceedingly indignant at the conduct of Ovando. He had left him for many months in a state of the utmost danger, and most distressing uncertainty, exposed to the hostilities of the natives, the seditions of his men, and the suggestions of his own despair. He had, at length, sent a mere tantalizing message, by a man known to be one of his bitterest enemies, with a present of food, which, from its scantiness, seemed intended to mock their necessities.

Columbus believed that Ovando had purposely neglected him, hoping that he might perish on the island, being apprehensive that, should he return in safety, he would be reinstated in the government of Hispaniola; and he considered Escobar merely as a spy sent to ascertain the state of himself and his crew, and whether they were yet in existence. Las Casas, who was then at San Domingo, expresses similar suspicions. He says that Escobar was chosen because Ovando was certain that, from ancient enmity, he would have no sympathy for the admiral. That he was ordered not to go on board of the vessels, nor to land, neither was he to hold conversation with any of the crew, nor to receive any letters, except those of the admiral. In a word, that he was a mere scout to collect information.*

Others have ascribed the long neglect of Ovando to extreme caution. There was a rumor prevalent that Columbus, irritated at the suspension of his dignities by the court of Spain, intended to transfer his newly-discovered countries into the hands of his native republic Genoa, or of some other power. Such rumors

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 33. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 103.

had long been current, and to their recent circulation Columbus himself alludes in his letter sent to the sovereigns by Diego Mendez. The most plausible apology given, is, that Ovando was absent for several months in the interior, occupied in wars with the natives, and that there were no ships at San Domingo of sufficient burden to take Columbus and his crew to Spain. He may have feared that, should they come to reside for any length of time on the island, either the admiral would interfere in public affairs, or endeavor to make a party in his favor; or that, in consequence of the number of his old enemies still resident there, former scenes of faction and turbulence might be revived.* In the meantime the situation of Columbus in Jamaica, while it disposed of him quietly until vessels should arrive from Spain, could not, he may have thought, be hazardous. He had sufficient force and arms for defence, and he had made amicable arrangements with the natives for the supply of provisions, as Diego Mendez, who had made those arrangements, had no doubt informed him. Such may have been the reasoning by which Ovando, under the real influence of his interest, may have reconciled his conscience to a measure which excited the strong reprobation of his contemporaries, and has continued to draw upon him the suspicions of mankind.

* Las Casas, ubi. sup. Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

CHAPTER V.

VOYAGE OF DIEGO MENDEZ AND BARTHOLOMEW FIESCO IN A CANOE TO HISPANIOLA.

[1504.]

It is proper to give here some account of the mission of Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco, and of the circumstances which prevented the latter from returning to Jamaica. Having taken leave of the Adelantado at the east end of the island, they continued all day in a direct course, animating the Indians who navigated their canoes, and who frequently paused at their labor. There was no wind, the sky was without a cloud, and the sea perfectly calm; the heat was intolerable, and the rays of the sun reflected from the surface of the ocean, seemed to scorch their very eyes. The Indians, exhausted by heat and toil, would often leap into the water to cool and refresh themselves, and, after remaining there a short time, would return with new vigor to their labors. At the going down of the sun they lost sight of land. During the night the Indians took turns, one half to row while the others slept. The Spaniards, in like manner, divided their forces: while one half took repose, the others kept guard with their weapons in hand, ready to defend themselves in case of any perfidy on the part of their savage companions.

Watching and toiling in this way through the night, they were

exceedingly fatigued at the return of day. Nothing was to be seen but sea and sky. Their frail canoes, heaving up and down with the swelling and sinking of the ocean, seemed scarcely capable of sustaining the broad undulations of a calm; how would they be able to live amid waves and surges, should the wind arise? The commanders did all they could to keep up the flagging spirits of the men. Sometimes they permitted them a respite; at other times they took the paddles and shared their toils. But labor and fatigue were soon forgotten in a new source of suffering. During the preceding sultry day and night, the Indians, parched and fatigued, had drunk up all the water. They now began to experience the torments of thirst. In proportion as the day advanced, their thirst increased; the calm, which favored the navigation of the canoes, rendered this misery the more intense. There was not a breeze to fan the air, nor counteract the ardent rays of a tropical sun. Their sufferings were irritated by the prospect around them—nothing but water, while they were perishing with thirst. At mid-day their strength failed them, and they could work no longer. Fortunately, at this time the commanders of the canoes found, or pretended to find, two small kegs of water, which they had perhaps secretly reserved for such an extremity. Administering the precious contents from time to time, in sparing mouthfuls to their companions, and particularly to the laboring Indians, they enabled them to resume their toils. They cheered them with the hopes of soon arriving at a small island called Navasa, which lay directly in their way, and was only eight leagues from Hispaniola. Here they would be able to procure water, and might take repose.

For the rest of the day they continued faintly and wearily laboring forward, and keeping an anxious look-out for the island.

The day passed away, the sun went down, yet there was no sign of land, not even a cloud on the horizon that might deceive them into a hope. According to their calculations, they had certainly come the distance from Jamaica at which Navassa lay. They began to fear that they had deviated from their course. If so, they should miss the island entirely, and perish with thirst before they could reach Hispaniola.

The night closed upon them without any sight of the island. They now despaired of touching at it, for it was so small and low that, even if they were to pass near, they would scarcely be able to perceive it in the dark. One of the Indians sank and died, under the accumulated sufferings of labor, heat, and raging thirst. His body was thrown into the sea. Others lay panting and gasping at the bottom of the canoes. Their companions, troubled in spirit, and exhausted in strength, feebly continued their toils. Sometimes they endeavored to cool their parched palates by taking sea-water in their mouths, but its briny acrimony rather increased their thirst. Now and then, but very sparingly, they were allowed a drop of water from the kegs; but this was only in cases of the utmost extremity, and principally to those who were employed in rowing. The night had far advanced, but those whose turn it was to take repose were unable to sleep, from the intensity of their thirst; or if they slept, it was but to be tantalized with dreams of cool fountains and running brooks, and to awaken in redoubled torment. The last drop of water had been dealt out to the Indian rowers, but it only served to irritate their sufferings. They scarce could move their paddles; one after another gave up, and it seemed impossible they should live to reach Hispaniola.

The commanders, by admirable management, had hitherto

kept up this weary struggle with suffering and despair: they now, too, began to despond. Diego Mendez sat watching the horizon, which was gradually lighting up with those faint rays which precede the rising of the moon. As that planet rose, he perceived it to emerge from behind some dark mass elevated above the level of the ocean. He immediately gave the animating cry of "land!" His almost expiring companions were roused by it to new life. It proved to be the island of Navasa, but so small, and low, and distant, that had it not been thus revealed by the rising of the moon, they would never have discovered it. The error in their reckoning with respect to the island had arisen from miscalculating the rate of sailing of the canoes, and from not making sufficient allowance for the fatigue of the rowers and the opposition of the current.

New vigor was now diffused throughout the crews. They exerted themselves with feverish impatience; by the dawn of day they reached the land, and, springing on shore, returned thanks to God for such signal deliverance. The island was a mere mass of rocks half a league in circuit. There was neither tree, nor shrub, nor herbage, nor stream, nor fountain. Hurrying about, however, with anxious search, they found to their joy abundance of rain-water in the hollows of the rocks. Eagerly scooping it up, with their calabashes, they quenched their burning thirst by immoderate draughts. In vain the more prudent warned the others of their danger. The Spaniards were in some degree restrained; but the poor Indians, whose toils had increased the fever of their thirst, gave way to a kind of frantic indulgence. Several died upon the spot, and others fell dangerously ill.*

* Not far from the island of Navasa there gushes up in the sea a pure fountain of fresh water that sweetens the surface for some distance: this cir-

Having allayed their thirst, they now looked about in search of food. A few shell-fish were found along the shore, and Diego Mendez, striking a light, and gathering drift-wood, they were enabled to boil them, and to make a delicious banquet. All day they remained reposing in the shade of the rocks, refreshing themselves after their intolerable sufferings, and gazing upon Hispaniola, whose mountains rose above the horizon, at eight leagues distance.

In the cool of the evening they once more embarked, invigorated by repose, and arrived safely at Cape Tiburon on the following day, the fourth since their departure from Jamaica. Here they landed on the banks of a beautiful river, where they were kindly received and treated by the natives. Such are the particulars, collected from different sources, of this adventurous and interesting voyage, on the precarious success of which depended the deliverance of Columbus and his crews.* The voyagers remained for two days among the hospitable natives on the banks of the river to refresh themselves. Fiesco would have returned to Jamaica, according to promise, to give assurance to the admiral and his companions of the safe arrival of their messenger; but both Spaniards and Indians had suffered so much during the voyage, that nothing could induce them to encounter the perils of a return in the canoes.

Parting with his companions, Diego Mendez took six Indians of the island, and set off resolutely to coast in his canoe one hundred and thirty leagues to San Domingo. After proceeding

cumstance was of course unknown to the Spaniards at the time. (Oviedo, Cronica, lib. vi. cap. 12.)

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 105. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 31. Testament of Diego Mendez. Navarrete, tom. i.

for eighty leagues, with infinite toil, always against the currents, and subject to perils from the native tribes, he was informed that the governor had departed for Xaragua, fifty leagues distant. Still undaunted by fatigues and difficulties, he abandoned his canoe, and proceeded alone and on foot through forests and over mountains, until he arrived at Xaragua, achieving one of the most perilous expeditions ever undertaken by a devoted follower for the safety of his commander.

Ovando received him with great kindness, expressing the utmost concern at the unfortunate situation of Columbus. He made many promises of sending immediate relief, but suffered day after day, week after week, and even month after month to elapse, without carrying his promises into effect. He was at that time completely engrossed by wars with the natives, and had a ready plea that there were no ships of sufficient burden at San Domingo. Had he felt a proper zeal, however, for the safety of a man like Columbus, it would have been easy, within eight months, to have devised some means, if not of delivering him from his situation, at least of conveying to him ample reinforcements and supplies.

The faithful Mendez remained for seven months in Xaragua, detained there under various pretexts by Ovando, who was unwilling that he should proceed to San Domingo; partly, as is intimated, from his having some jealousy of his being employed in secret agency for the admiral, and partly from a desire to throw impediments in the way of his obtaining the required relief. At length, by daily importunity, he obtained permission to go to San Domingo, and await the arrival of certain ships which were expected, of which he proposed to purchase one on the account of the admiral. He immediately set out on foot a distance of seventy

leagues, part of his toilsome journey lying through forests and among mountains infested by hostile and exasperated Indians. It was after his departure that Ovando dispatched the caravel commanded by the pardoned rebel Escobar, on that singular and equivocal visit, which, in the eyes of Columbus, had the air of a mere scouting expedition to spy into the camp of an enemy.

CHAPTER VI.

OVERTURES OF COLUMBUS TO THE MUTINEERS.—BATTLE OF THE ADELANTADO WITH PORRAS AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

[1503.]

When Columbus had soothed the disappointment of his men at the brief and unsatisfactory visit and sudden departure of Escobar, he endeavored to turn the event to some advantage with the rebels. He knew them to be disheartened by the inevitable miseries attending a lawless and dissolute life; that many longed to return to the safe and quiet path of duty; and that the most malignant, seeing how he had foiled all their intrigues among the natives to produce a famine, began to fear his ultimate triumph and consequent vengeance. A favorable opportunity, he thought, now presented to take advantage of these feelings, and by gentle means to bring them back to their allegiance. He sent two of his people, therefore, who were most intimate with the rebels, to inform them of the recent arrival of Escobar with letters from the Governor of Hispaniola, promising him a speedy deliverance from the island. He now offered a free pardon, kind treatment, and a passage with him in the expected ships, on condition of their immediate return to obedience. To convince them of the arrival of the vessel, he sent them a part of the bacon which had been brought by Escobar.

On the approach of these ambassadors, Francisco de Porras came forth to meet them, accompanied solely by a few of the ringleaders of his party. He imagined that there might be some propositions from the admiral, and he was fearful of their being heard by the mass of his people, who, in their dissatisfied and repentant mood, would be likely to desert him on the least prospect of pardon. Having listened to the tidings and overtures brought by the messengers, he and his confidential confederates consulted for some time together. Perfidious in their own nature, they suspected the sincerity of the admiral; and conscious of the extent of their offences, doubted his having the magnanimity to pardon them. Determined, therefore, not to confide in his proffered amnesty, they replied to the messengers, that they had no wish to return to the ships, but preferred living at large about the island. They offered to engage, however, to conduct themselves peaceably and amicably, on receiving a solemn promise from the admiral, that should two vessels arrive, they should have one to depart in: should but one arrive, that half of it should be granted to them; and that, moreover, the admiral should share with them the stores and articles of Indian traffic remaining in the ships, having lost all that they had, in the sea. These demands were pronounced extravagant and inadmissible, upon which they replied insolently that, if they were not peaceably conceded, they would take them by force; and with this menace they dismissed the ambassadors.*

This conference was not conducted so privately, but that the rest of the rebels learnt the purport of the mission; and the offer of pardon and deliverance occasioned great tumult and agitation.

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 35. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 106.

Porras, fearful of their desertion, assured them that these offers of the admiral were all deceitful; that he was naturally cruel and vindictive, and only sought to get them into his power to wreak on them his vengeance. He exhorted them to persist in their opposition to his tyranny; reminding them, that those who had formerly done so in Hispaniola, had eventually triumphed, and sent him home in irons; he assured them that they might do the same; and again made vaunting promises of protection in Spain, through the influence of his relatives. But the boldest of his assertions was with respect to the caravel of Escobar. It shows the ignorance of the age, and the superstitious awe which the common people entertained with respect to Columbus and his astronomical knowledge. Porras assured them that no real caravel had arrived, but a mere phantasm conjured up by the admiral, who was deeply versed in necromancy. In proof of this, he adverted to its arriving in the dusk of the evening; its holding communication with no one but the admiral, and its sudden disappearance in the night. Had it been a real caravel, the crew would have sought to talk with their countrymen; the admiral, his son and brother, would have eagerly embarked on board, and it would at any rate have remained a little while in port, and not have vanished so suddenly and mysteriously.*

By these, and similar delusions, Porras succeeded in working upon the feelings and credulity of his followers. Fearful, however, that they might yield to after reflection, and to further offers from the admiral, he determined to involve them in some act of violence which would commit them beyond all hopes of forgiveness. He marched them, therefore, to an Indian village called

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 106. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 35.

Maima,* about a quarter of a league from the ships, intending to plunder the stores remaining on board the wreck, and to take the admiral prisoner.†

Columbus had notice of the designs of the rebels, and of their approach. Being confined by his infirmities, he sent his brother to endeavor with mild words to persuade them from their purpose, and win them to obedience; but with sufficient force to resist any violence. The Adelantado, who was a man rather of deeds than of words, took with him fifty followers, men of tried resolution, and ready to fight in any cause. They were well armed and full of courage, though many were pale and debilitated from recent sickness, and from long confinement to the ships. Arriving on the side of a hill, within a bow-shot of the village, the Adelantado discovered the rebels, and dispatched the same two messengers to treat with them, who had already carried them the offer of pardon. Porras and his fellow-leaders, however, would not permit them to approach. They confided in the superiority of their numbers, and in their men being, for the most part, hardy sailors, rendered robust and vigorous by the roving life they had been leading in the forests and the open air. They knew that many of those who were with the Adelantado were men brought up in a softer mode of life. They pointed to their pale countenances, and persuaded their followers that they were mere household men, fair-weather troops, who could never stand before them. They did not reflect that, with such men, pride and lofty spirit often more than supply the place of bodily force, and they forgot that their adversaries had the incalculable advantage of justice and law upon their side. Deluded by their words, their

* At present Mammee Bay. † Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

followers were excited to a transient glow of courage, and brandishing their weapons, refused to listen to the messengers.

Six of the stoutest rebels made a league to stand by one another and attack the Adelantado; for, he being killed, the rest would be easily defeated. The main body formed themselves into a squadron, drawing their swords and shaking their lances. They did not wait to be assailed, but, uttering shouts and menaces, rushed upon the enemy. They were so well received, however, that at the first shock four or five were killed, most of them the confederates who had leagued to attack the Adelantado. The latter, with his own hand, killed Juan Sanchez, the same powerful mariner who had carried off the cacique Quibian; and Juan Barber also, who had first drawn a sword against the admiral in this rebellion. The Adelantado with his usual vigor and courage was dealing his blows about him in the thickest of the affray, where several lay killed and wounded, when he was assailed by Francisco de Porras. The rebel with a blow of his sword cleft the buckler of Don Bartholomew, and wounded the hand which grasped it. The sword remained wedged in the shield, and before Porras could withdraw it, the Adelantado closed upon him, grappled him, and, being assisted by others, after a severe struggle, took him prisoner.*

When the rebels beheld their leader a captive, their transient courage was at an end, and they fled in confusion. The Adelantado would have pursued them, but was persuaded to let them escape with the punishment they had received; especially as it was necessary to guard against the possibility of an attack from the Indians.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 107. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 35.

The latter had taken arms and drawn up in battle array, gazing with astonishment at this fight between white men, but without taking part on either side. When the battle was over, they approached the field, gazing upon the dead bodies of the beings they had once fancied immortal. They were curious in examining the wounds made by the Christian weapons. Among the wounded insurgents was Pedro Ledesma, the same pilot who so bravely swam ashore at Veragua, to procure tidings of the colony. He was a man of prodigious muscular force and a hoarse deep voice. As the Indians, who thought him dead, were inspecting the wounds with which he was literally covered, he suddenly uttered an ejaculation in his tremendous voice, at the sound of which the savages fled in dismay. This man having fallen into a cleft or ravine, was not discovered by the white men until the dawning of the following day, having remained all that time without a drop of water. The number and severity of the wounds he is said to have received would seem incredible, but they are mentioned by Fernando Columbus, who was an eye-witness, and by Las Casas, who had the account from Ledesma himself. For want of proper remedies, his wounds were treated in the roughest manner, yet, through the aid of a vigorous constitution, he completely recovered. Las Casas conversed with him several years afterwards at Seville, when he obtained from him various particulars concerning this voyage of Columbus. Some few days after this conversation, however, he heard that Ledesma had fallen under the knife of an assassin.*

The Adelantado returned in triumph to the ships, where he was received by the admiral in the most affectionate manner; thanking him as his deliverer. He brought Porras and several

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 35.

of his followers prisoners. Of his own party only two had been wounded; himself in the hand, and the admiral's steward, who had received an apparently slight wound with a lance, equal to one of the most insignificant of those with which Ledesma was covered; yet, in spite of careful treatment, he died.

On the next day, the 20th of May, the fugitives sent a petition to the admiral, signed with all their names, in which, says Las Casas, they confessed all their misdeeds, and cruelties, and evil intentions, supplicating the admiral to have pity on them and pardon them for their rebellion, for which God had already punished them. They offered to return to their obedience and to serve him faithfully in future, making an oath to that effect upon a cross and a missal, accompanied by an imprecation worthy of being recorded: "They hoped, should they break their oath, that no priest nor other Christian might ever confess them; that repentance might be of no avail; that they might be deprived of the holy sacraments of the church; that at their death they might receive no benefit from bulls nor indulgences; that their bodies might be cast out into the fields like those of heretics and renegadoes, instead of being buried in holy ground; and that they might not receive absolution from the pope, nor from cardinals, nor archbishops, nor bishops, nor any other Christian priests."* Such were the awful imprecations by which these men endeavored to add validity to an oath. The worthlessness of a man's word may always be known by the extravagant means he uses to enforce it.

The admiral saw, by the abject nature of this petition, how completely the spirit of these misguided men was broken; with his wonted magnanimity, he readily granted their prayer, and

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 32.

pardoned their offences; but on one condition, that their ring leader, Francisco Porras, should remain a prisoner.

As it was difficult to maintain so many persons on board of the ships, and as quarrels might take place between persons who had so recently been at blows, Columbus put the late followers of Porras under the command of a discreet and faithful man; and giving in his charge a quantity of European articles for the purpose of purchasing food of the natives, directed him to forage about the island until the expected vessels should arrive.

At length, after a long year of alternate hope and despondency, the doubts of the Spaniards were joyfully dispelled by the sight of two vessels standing into the harbor. One proved to be a ship hired and well victualed, at the expense of the admiral, by the faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez; the other had been subsequently fitted out by Ovando, and put under the command of Diego de Salcedo, the admiral's agent employed to collect his rents in San Domingo.

The long neglect of Ovando to attend to the relief of Columbus had, it seems, roused the public indignation, insomuch that animadversions had been made upon his conduct even in the pulpits. This is affirmed by Las Casas, who was at San Domingo at the time. If the governor had really entertained hopes that, during the delay of relief, Columbus might perish in the island, the report brought back by Escobar must have completely disappointed him. No time was to be lost if he wished to claim any merit in his deliverance, or to avoid the disgrace of having totally neglected him. He exerted himself, therefore, at the eleventh hour, and dispatched a caravel at the same time with the ship sent by Diego Mendez. The latter, having faithfully dis-

charged this part of his mission, and seen the ships depart, proceeded to Spain on the further concerns of the admiral.*

* Some brief notice of the further fortunes of Diego Mendez may be interesting to the reader. When King Ferdinand heard of his faithful services says Oviedo, he bestowed rewards upon Mendez, and permitted him to bear a canoe in his coat of arms, as a memento of his loyalty. He continued devotedly attached to the admiral, serving him zealously after his return to Spain, and during his last illness. Columbus retained the most grateful and affectionate sense of his fidelity. On his death-bed he promised Mendez that, in reward for his services, he should be appointed principal Alguazil of the island of Hispaniola; an engagement which the admiral's son, Don Diego, who was present, cheerfully undertook to perform. A few years afterwards, when the latter succeeded to the office of his father, Mendez reminded him of the promise, but Don Diego informed him that he had given the office to his uncle Don Bartholomew; he assured him, however, that he should receive something equivalent. Mendez shrewdly replied, that the equivalent had better be given to Don Bartholomew, and the office to himself, according to agreement. The promise, however, remained unperformed, and Diego Mendez unrewarded. He was afterwards engaged on voyages of discovery in vessels of his own, but met with many vicissitudes, and appears to have died in impoverished circumstances. His last will, from which these particulars are principally gathered, was dated in Valladolid, the 19th of June, 1536, by which it is evident he must have been in the prime of life at the time of his voyage with the admiral. In this will he requested that the reward which had been promised to him should be paid to his children, by making his eldest son principal Alguazil for life of the city of San Domingo, and his other son lieutenant to the admiral for the same city. It does not appear whether this request was complied with under the successors of Don Diego.

In another clause of his will, he desired that a large stone should be placed upon his sepulchre, on which should be engraved, "Here lies the honorable Cavalier Diego Mendez, who served greatly the royal crown of Spain, in the conquest of the Indies, with the admiral Don Christopher Columbus, of glorious memory, who made the discovery; and afterwards by himself, with ships at

his own cost. He died, &c., &c. Bestow in charity a Paternoster, and an Ave Maria."

He ordered that in the midst of this stone there should be carved an Indian canoe, as given him by the king for armorial bearings in memorial of his voyage from Jamaica to Hispaniola, and above it should be engraved in large letters, the word "CANOA." He enjoined upon his heirs to be loyal to the admiral (Don Diego Columbus), and his lady, and gave them much ghostly counsel, mingled with pious benedictions. As an heir-loom in his family, he bequeathed his library, consisting of a few volumes, which accompanied him in his wanderings; viz. "The Art of Holy Dying, by Erasmus; A Sermon of the same author, in Spanish; The Lingua and the Colloquies of the same; The History of Josephus; The Moral Philosophy of Aristotle; The Book of the Holy Land; A Book called the Contemplation of the Passion of our Saviour; A Tract on the Vengeance of the Death of Agamemnon, and several other short treatises." This curious and characteristic testament is in the archives of the Duke of Veragua in Madrid.

BOOK XVII.

CHAPTER I.

ADMINISTRATION OF OVANDO IN HISPANIOLA.—OPPRESSION OF THE NATIVES.

[1503.]

BEFORE relating the return of Columbus to Hispaniola, it is proper to notice some of the principal occurrences which took place in that island under the government of Ovando. A great crowd of adventurers of various ranks had thronged his fleet—eager speculators, credulous dreamers, and broken-down gentlemen of desperate fortunes; all expecting to enrich themselves suddenly in an island where gold was to be picked up from the surface of the soil, or gathered from the mountain-brooks. They had scarcely landed, says Las Casas, who accompanied the expedition, when they all hurried off to the mines, about eight leagues distance. The roads swarmed like ant-hills, with adventurers of all classes. Every one had his knapsack stored with biscuit or flour, and his mining implements on his shoulders. Those hidalgos, or gentlemen, who had no servants to carry their burdens, bore them on their own backs, and lucky was he who had a horse for the journey; he would be able to bring back the greater load of

treasure. They all set out in high spirits, eager who should first reach the golden land; thinking they had but to arrive at the mines, and collect riches; "for they fancied," says Las Casas, "that gold was to be gathered as easily and readily as fruit from the trees." When they arrived, however, they discovered, to their dismay, that it was necessary to dig painfully into the bowels of the earth—a labor to which most of them had never been accustomed; that it required experience and sagacity to detect the veins of ore; that, in fact, the whole process of mining was exceedingly toilsome, demanded vast patience and much experience, and, after all, was full of uncertainty. They digged eagerly for a time, but found no ore. They grew hungry, threw by their implements, sat down to eat, and then returned to work. It was all in vain. "Their labor," says Las Casas, "gave them a keen appetite and quick digestion, but no gold." They soon consumed their provisions, exhausted their patience, cursed their infatuation, and in eight days set off drearily on their return along the roads they had lately trod so exultingly. They arrived at San Domingo without an ounce of gold, half-famished, downcast, and despairing.* Such is too often the case of those who ignorantly engage in mining—of all speculations the most brilliant, promising, and fallacious.

Poverty soon fell upon these misguided men. They exhausted the little property brought from Spain. Many suffered extremely from hunger, and were obliged to exchange even their apparel for bread. Some formed connections with the old settlers of the island; but the greater part were like men lost and bewildered, and just awakened from a dream. The miseries of the mind, as usual, heightened the sufferings of the body. Some wasted away

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 6.

and died broken-hearted; others were hurried off by raging fevers, so that there soon perished upwards of a thousand men.

Ovando was reputed a man of great prudence and sagacity, and he certainly took several judicious measures for the regulation of the island, and the relief of the colonists. He made arrangements for distributing the married persons and the families which had come out in his fleet, in four towns in the interior, granting them important privileges. He revived the drooping zeal for mining, by reducing the royal share of the product from one-half to a third, and shortly after to a fifth; but he empowered the Spaniards to avail themselves, in the most oppressive manner, of the labor of the unhappy natives in working the mines. The charge of treating the natives with severity had been one of those chiefly urged against Columbus. It is proper, therefore, to notice, in this respect, the conduct of his successor, a man chosen for his prudence, and his supposed capacity to govern.

It will be recollected, that when Columbus was in a manner compelled to assign lands to the rebellious followers of Francisco Roldan in 1499, he had made an arrangement, that the caciques in their vicinity should, in lieu of tribute, furnish a number of their subjects to assist them in cultivating their estates. This, as has been observed, was the commencement of the disastrous system of repartimientos, or distributions of Indians. When Bobadilla administered the government, he constrained the caciques to furnish a certain number of Indians to each Spaniard, for the purpose of working the mines; where they were employed like beasts of burden. He made an enumeration of the natives, to prevent evasion; reduced them into classes, and distributed them among the Spanish inhabitants. The enormous oppressions which ensued have been noticed. They roused the indignation of Isabella;

and when Ovando was sent out to supersede Bobadilla, in 1502 the natives were pronounced free; they immediately refused to labor in the mines.

Ovando represented to the Spanish sovereigns, in 1503, that ruinous consequences resulted to the colony from this entire liberty granted to the Indians. He stated that the tribute could not be collected, for the Indians were lazy and improvident; that they could only be kept from vices and irregularities by occupation; that they now kept aloof from the Spaniards, and from all instruction in the Christian faith.

The last representation had an influence with Isabella, and drew a letter from the sovereigns to Ovando in 1503, in which he was ordered to spare no pains to attach the natives to the Spanish nation and the Catholic religion. To make them labor moderately, if absolutely essential to their own good; but to temper authority with persuasion and kindness. To pay them regularly and fairly for their labor, and to have them instructed in religion on certain days.

Ovando availed himself of the powers given him by this letter, to their fullest extent. He assigned to each Castilian a certain number of Indians, according to the quality of the applicant, the nature of the application, or his own pleasure. It was arranged in the form of an order on a cacique for a certain number of Indians, who were to be paid by their employer, and instructed in the Catholic faith. The pay was so small as to be little better than nominal; the instruction was little more than the mere ceremony of baptism; and the term of labor was at first six months, and then eight months in the year. Under cover of this hired labor, intended for the good both of their bodies and their souls, more intolerable toil was exacted from them, and more horrible

cruelties were inflicted, than in the worst days of Bobadilla. They were separated often the distance of several days' journey from their wives and children, and doomed to intolerable labor of all kinds, extorted by the cruel infliction of the lash. For food they had the cassava bread, an unsubstantial support for men obliged to labor; sometimes a scanty portion of pork was distributed among a great number of them, scarce a mouthful to each. When the Spaniards who superintended the mines were at their repast, says Las Casas, the famished Indians scrambled under the table, like dogs, for any bone thrown to them. After they had gnawed and sucked it, they pounded it between stones and mixed it with their cassava bread, that nothing of so precious a morsel might be lost. As to those who labored in the fields, they never tasted either flesh or fish; a little cassava bread and a few roots were their support. While the Spaniards thus withheld the nourishment necessary to sustain their health and strength, they exacted a degree of labor sufficient to break down the most vigorous man. If the Indians fled from this incessant toil and barbarous coercion, and took refuge in the mountains, they were hunted out like wild beasts, scourged in the most inhuman manner, and laden with chains to prevent a second escape. Many perished long before their term of labor had expired. Those who survived their term of six or eight months, were permitted to return to their homes, until the next term commenced. But their homes were often forty, sixty, and eighty leagues distant. They had nothing to sustain them through the journey but a few roots or agi peppers, or a little cassava bread. Worn down by long toil and cruel hardships, which their feeble constitutions were incapable of sustaining, many had not strength to perform the journey, but sank down and died by the way; some by the

side of a brook, others under the shade of a tree, where they had crawled for shelter from the sun. "I have found many dead in the road," says Las Casas, "others gasping under the trees, and others in the pangs of death, faintly crying Hunger! hunger!"* Those who reached their homes most commonly found them desolate. During the eight months they had been absent, their wives and children had either perished or wandered away; the fields on which they depended for food were overrun with weeds, and nothing was left them but to lie down, exhausted and despairing, and die at the threshold of their habitations.†

It is impossible to pursue any further the picture drawn by the venerable Las Casas, not of what he had heard, but of what he had seen; nature and humanity revolt at the details. Suffice it to say that, so intolerable were the toils and sufferings inflicted upon this weak and unoffending race, that they sank under them, dissolving, as it were, from the face of the earth. Many killed themselves in despair, and even mothers overcame the powerful instinct of nature, and destroyed the infants at their breasts, to spare them a life of wretchedness. Twelve years had not elapsed since the discovery of the island, and several hundred thousand of its native inhabitants had perished, miserable victims to the grasping avarice of the white men.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 14, MS. † Idem, ubi sup.

CHAPTER II.

MASSACRE AT XARAGUA.—FATE OF ANACAONA.

[1503]

THE sufferings of the natives under the civil policy of Ovando have been briefly shown; it remains to give a concise view of the military operations of this commander, so lauded by certain of the early historians for his prudence. By this notice a portion of the eventful history of this island will be recounted which is connected with the fortunes of Columbus, and which comprises the thorough subjugation, and, it may almost be said, extermination of the native inhabitants. And first, we must treat of the disasters of the beautiful province of Xaragua, the seat of hospitality, the refuge of the suffering Spaniards; and of the fate of the female cacique, Anacaona, once the pride of the island, and the generous friend of white men.

Behechio, the ancient cacique of this province, being dead, Anacaona, his sister, had succeeded to the government. The marked partiality which she once manifested for the Spaniards had been greatly weakened by the general misery they had produced in her country; and by the brutal profligacy exhibited in her immediate dominions by the followers of Roldan. The unhappy story of the loves of her beautiful daughter Higuenamota,

with the young Spaniard Hernando de Guevara, had also caused her great affliction; and, finally, the various and enduring hardships inflicted on her once happy subjects by the grinding systems of labor enforced by Bobadilla and Ovando, had at length, it is said, converted her friendship into absolute detestation.

This disgust was kept alive and aggravated by the Spaniards who lived in her immediate neighborhood, and had obtained grants of land there; a remnant of the rebel faction of Roldan, who retained the gross licentiousness and open profligacy in which they had been indulged under the loose misrule of that commander, and who made themselves odious to the inferior caciques, by exacting services tyrannically and capriciously under the baneful system of repartimentos.

The Indians of this province were uniformly represented as a more intelligent, polite, and generous-spirited race than any others of the islands. They were the more prone to feel and resent the overbearing treatment to which they were subjected. Quarrels sometimes took place between the caciques and their oppressors. These were immediately reported to the governor as dangerous mutinies; and a resistance to any capricious and extortionate exaction was magnified into a rebellious resistance to the authority of government. Complaints of this kind were continually pouring in upon Ovando, until he was persuaded by some alarmist, or some designing mischief-maker, that there was a deep-laid conspiracy among the Indians of this province to rise upon the Spaniards.

Ovando immediately set out for Xaragua at the head of three hundred foot-soldiers, armed with swords, arquebuses, and cross-bows, and seventy horsemen, with cuirasses, bucklers, and lances. He pretended that he was going on a mere visit of friendship

to Anacaona, and to make arrangements about the payment of tribute.

When Anacaona heard of the intended visit, she summoned all her tributary caciques, and principal subjects, to assemble at her chief town, that they might receive the commander of the Spaniards with becoming homage and distinction. As Ovando, at the head of his little army, approached, she went forth to meet him, according to the custom of her nation, attended by a great train of her most distinguished subjects, male and female; who, as has been before observed, were noted for superior grace and beauty. They received the Spaniards with their popular areytos, their national songs; the young women waving palm branches and dancing before them, in the way that had so much charmed the followers of the Adelantado, on his first visit to the province.

Anacaona treated the governor with that natural graciousness and dignity for which she was celebrated. She gave him the largest house in the place for his residence, and his people were quartered in the houses adjoining. For several days the Spaniards were entertained with all the natural luxuries that the province afforded. National songs and dances and games were performed for their amusement, and there was every outward demonstration of the same hospitality, the same amity, that Anacaona had uniformly shown to white men.

Notwithstanding all this kindness, and notwithstanding her uniform integrity of conduct, and open generosity of character, Ovando was persuaded that Anacaona was secretly meditating a massacre of himself and his followers. Historians tell us nothing of the grounds for such a belief. It was too probably produced by the misrepresentations of the unprincipled adventurers who

infested the province. Ovando should have paused and reflected before he acted upon it. He should have considered the improbability of such an attempt by naked Indians against so large a force of steel-clad troops, armed with European weapons; and he should have reflected upon the general character and conduct of Anacaona. At any rate, the example set repeatedly by Columbus and his brother the Adelantado, should have convinced him that it was a sufficient safeguard against the machinations of the natives, to seize upon their caciques and detain them as hostages. The policy of Ovando, however, was of a more rash and sanguinary nature; he acted upon suspicion as upon conviction. He determined to anticipate the alleged plot by a counter-artifice, and to overwhelm this defenceless people in an indiscriminate and bloody vengeance.

As the Indians had entertained their guests with various national games, Ovando invited them in return to witness certain games of his country. Among these was a tilting match or joust with reeds; a chivalrous game which the Spaniards had learnt from the Moors of Granada. The Spanish cavalry, in those days, were as remarkable for the skillful management, as for the ostentatious caparison of their horses. Among the troops brought out from Spain by Ovando, one horseman had disciplined his horse to prance and curvet in time to the music of a viol.* The joust was appointed to take place of a Sunday after dinner, in the public square, before the house where Ovando was quartered. The cavalry and foot soldiers had their secret instructions. The former were to parade, not merely with reeds or blunted tilting lances, but with weapons of a more deadly character. The foot soldiers

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 9.

were to come apparently as mere spectators, but likewise armed and ready for action at a concerted signal.

At the appointed time the square was crowded with the Indians, waiting to see this military spectacle. The caciques were assembled in the house of Ovando, which looked upon the square. None were armed; an unreserved confidence prevailed among them, totally incompatible with the dark treachery of which they were accused. To prevent all suspicion, and take off all appearance of sinister design, Ovando, after dinner, was playing at quoits with some of his principal officers, when the cavalry having arrived in the square, the caciques begged the governor to order the joust to commence.* Anacaona, and her beautiful daughter Higuenamota, with several of her female attendants, were present and joined in the request.

Ovando left his game and came forward to a conspicuous place. When he saw that every thing was disposed according to his orders, he gave the fatal signal. Some say it was by taking hold of a piece of gold which was suspended about his neck;† others by laying his hand on the cross of Alcantara, which was embroidered on his habit.‡ A trumpet was immediately sounded. The house in which Anacaona and all the principal caciques were assembled was surrounded by soldiery, commanded by Diego Velasquez and Rodrigo Mexiatrillo, and no one was permitted to escape. They entered, and seizing upon the caciques, bound them to the posts which supported the roof. Anacaona was led forth a prisoner. The unhappy caciques were then put to horrible tortures, until some of them, in the extremity of anguish, were

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, lib. iii. cap. 12.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 9.

‡ Charlevoix, Hist. San Domingo, lib. xxiv. p. 235.

made to accuse their queen and themselves of the plot with which they were charged. When this cruel mockery of judicial form had been executed, instead of preserving them for after-examination, fire was set to the house, and all the caciques perished miserably in the flames.

While these barbarities were practised upon the chieftains, a horrible massacre took place among the populace. At the signal of Ovando, the horsemen rushed into the midst of the naked and defenceless throng, trampling them under the hoofs of their steeds, cutting them down with their swords, and transfixing them with their spears. No mercy was shown to age or sex; it was a savage and indiscriminate butchery. Now and then a Spanish horseman, either through an emotion of pity, or an impulse of avarice, caught up a child, to bear it off in safety; but it was barbarously pierced by the lances of his companions. Humanity turns with horror from such atrocities, and would fain discredit them; but they are circumstantially and still more minutely recorded by the venerable bishop Las Casas, who was resident in the island at the time, and conversant with the principal actors in this tragedy. He may have colored the picture strongly, in his usual indignation when the wrongs of the Indians are in question; yet, from all concurring accounts, and from many precise facts which speak for themselves, the scene must have been most sanguinary and atrocious. Oviedo, who is loud in extolling the justice, and devotion, and charity, and meekness of Ovando, and his kind treatment of the Indians; and who visited the province of Xaragua a few years afterwards, records several of the preceding circumstances; especially the cold-blooded game of quoits played by the governor on the verge of such a horrible scene, and the burning of the caciques, to the number, he says, of more than forty.

Diego Mendez, who was at Xaragua at the time, and doubtless present on such an important occasion, says incidentally in his last will and testament, that there were eighty-four caciques either burnt or hanged.* Las Casas says, that there were eighty who entered the house with Anacaona. The slaughter of the multitude must have been great; and this was inflicted on an unarmed and unresisting throng. Several who escaped from the massacre fled in their canoes to an island about eight leagues distant, called Guanabo. They were pursued and taken, and condemned to slavery.

As to the princess Anacaona, she was carried in chains to San Domingo. The mockery of a trial was given her, in which she was found guilty on the confessions wrung by tortures from her subjects, and on the testimony of their butchers; and she was ignominiously hanged in the presence of the people whom she had so long and so signally befriended.† Oviedo has sought to throw a stigma on the character of this unfortunate princess, accusing her of great licentiousness; but he was prone to criminate the character of the native princes, who fell victims to the ingratitude and injustice of his countrymen. Contemporary writers of greater authority have concurred in representing Anacaona as remarkable for her native propriety and dignity. She was adored by her subjects, so as to hold a kind of dominion over them even during the lifetime of her brother: she is said to have been skilled in composing the areytos, or legendary ballads of her nation, and may have conduced much towards producing that

* Relacion hecha por Don Diego Mendez. Navarrete, Col., tom. i. p. 314.

† Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, lib. iii. cap. 12. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 9.

superior degree of refinement remarked among her people. Her grace and beauty had made her renowned throughout the island, and had excited the admiration both of the savage and the Spaniard. Her magnanimous spirit was evinced in her amicable treatment of the white men, although her husband, the brave Caonabo, had perished a prisoner in their hands; and defenceless parties of them had been repeatedly in her power, and lived at large in her dominions. After having, for several years, neglected all safe opportunities of vengeance, she fell a victim to the absurd charge of having conspired against an armed body of nearly four hundred men, seventy of them horsemen; a force sufficient to have subjugated large armies of naked Indians.

After the massacre of Xaragua, the destruction of its inhabitants still continued. The favorite nephew of Anacaona, the cacique Guaora, who had fled to the mountains, was hunted like a wild beast, until he was taken, and likewise hanged. For six months the Spaniards continued ravaging the country with horse and foot, under pretext of quelling insurrections; for, wherever the affrighted natives took refuge in their despair, herding in dismal caverns and in the fastnesses of the mountains, they were represented as assembling in arms to make a head of rebellion. Having at length hunted them out of their retreats, destroyed many, and reduced the survivors to the most deplorable misery and abject submission, the whole of that part of the island was considered as restored to good order; and in commemoration of this great triumph, Ovando founded a town near to the lake, which he called Santa Maria de la Verdadera Paz (St. Mary of the True Peace).*

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, lib. iii. cap. 12.

Such is the tragical history of the delightful region of Xaragua, and of its amiable and hospitable people. A place which the Europeans, by their own account, found a perfect paradise, but which, by their vile passions, they filled with horror and desolation.

CHAPTER III.

WAR WITH THE NATIVES OF HIGUEY.

[1504.]

The subjugation of four of the Indian sovereignties of Hispaniola, and the disastrous fate of their caciques, have been already related. Under the administration of Ovando, was also accomplished the downfall of Higuey, the last of those independent districts; a fertile province which comprised the eastern extremity of the island.

The people of Higuey were of a more warlike spirit than those of the other provinces, having learned the effectual use of their weapons, from frequent contests with their Carib invaders. They were governed by a cacique named Cotabanama. Las Casas describes this chieftain from actual observation, and draws the picture of a native hero. He was, he says, the strongest of his tribe, and more perfectly formed than one man in a thousand of any nation whatever. He was taller in stature than the tallest of his countrymen, a yard in breadth from shoulder to shoulder, and the rest of his body in admirable proportion. His aspect was not handsome, but grave and courageous. His bow was not easily bent by a common man; his arrows were three pronged, tipped with the bones of fishes, and his weapons appeared to be intended

for a giant. In a word, he was so nobly proportioned, as to be the admiration even of the Spaniards.

While Columbus was engaged in his fourth voyage, and shortly after the accession of Ovando to office, there was an insurrection of this cacique and his people. A shallop, with eight Spaniards, was surprised at the small island of Saona, adjacent to Higuey, and all the crew slaughtered. This was in revenge for the death of a cacique, torn to pieces by a dog wantonly set upon him by a Spaniard, and for which the natives had in vain sued for redress.

Ovando immediately dispatched Juan de Esquibel, a courageous officer, at the head of four hundred men, to quell the insurrection, and punish the massacre. Cotabanama assembled his warriors, and prepared for vigorous resistance. Distrustful of the mercy of the Spaniards, the chieftain rejected all overtures of peace, and the war was prosecuted with some advantage to the natives. The Indians had now overcome their superstitious awe of the white men as supernatural beings, and though they could ill withstand the superiority of European arms, they manifested a courage and dexterity that rendered them enemies not to be despised. Las Casas and other historians relate a bold and romantic encounter between a single Indian and two mounted cavaliers named Valtenebro and Portevedra, in which the Indian, though pierced through the body by the lances and swords of both his assailants, retained his fierceness, and continued the combat, until he fell dead in the possession of all their weapons.* This gallant action, says Las Casas, was public and notorious.

The Indians were soon defeated and driven to their mountain retreats. The Spaniards pursued them into their recesses, dis-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 8.

covered their wives and children, wreaked on them the most indiscriminate slaughter, and committed their chieftains to the flames. An aged female cacique of great distinction, named Higuanama, being taken prisoner, was hanged.

A detachment was sent in a caravel to the island of Saona, to take particular vengeance for the destruction of the shallop and its crew. The natives made a desperate defence and fled. The island was mountainous, and full of caverns, in which the Indians vainly sought for refuge. Six or seven hundred were imprisoned in a dwelling, and all put to the sword or poniarded. Those of the inhabitants who were spared were carried off as slaves; and the island was left desolate and deserted.

The natives of Higuey were driven to despair, seeing that there was no escape for them even in the bowels of the earth:* they sued for peace, which was granted them, and protection promised on condition of their cultivating a large tract of land, and paying a great quantity of bread in tribute. The peace being concluded, Cotabanama visited the Spanish camp, where his gigantic proportions and martial demeanor made him an object of curiosity and admiration. He was received with great distinction by Esquibel, and they exchanged names; an Indian league of fraternity and perpetual friendship. The natives thenceforward called the cacique Juan de Esquibel, and the Spanish commander Cotabanama. Esquibel then built a wooden fortress in an Indian village near the sea, and left in it nine men, with a captain, named Martin de Villaman. After this, the troops dispersed, every man returning home, with his proportion of slaves gained in this expedition.

The pacification was not of long continuance. About the

* Las Casas, ubi. sup.

time that succors were sent to Columbus, to rescue him from the wrecks of his vessels at Jamaica, a new revolt broke out in Higuey, in consequence of the oppressions of the Spaniards, and a violation of the treaty made by Esquibel. Martin de Villaman demanded that the natives should not only raise the grain stipulated for by the treaty, but convey it to San Domingo, and he treated them with the greatest severity on their refusal. He connived also at the licentious conduct of his men towards the Indian women; the Spaniards often taking from the natives their daughters and sisters, and even their wives.* The Indians, roused at last to fury, rose on their tyrants, slaughtered them, and burnt their wooden fortress to the ground. Only one of the Spaniards escaped, and bore the tidings of this catastrophe to the city of San Domingo.

Ovando gave immediate orders to carry fire and sword into the province of Higuey. The Spanish troops mustered from various quarters on the confines of that province, when Juan de Esquibel took the command, and had a great number of Indians with him as allies. The towns of Higuey were generally built among the mountains. Those mountains rose in terraces, from ten to fifteen leagues in length and breadth; rough and rocky, interspersed with glens of a red soil, remarkably fertile, where they raised their cassava-bread. The ascent from terrace to terrace was about fifty feet; steep and precipitous, formed of the living rock, and resembling a wall wrought with tools into rough diamond points. Each village had four wide streets, a stone's throw in length, forming a cross, the trees being cleared away from them, and from a public square in the centre.

* Las Casas, ubi. sup

When the Spanish troops arrived on the frontiers, alarm-fires along the mountains and columns of smoke spread the intelligence by night and day. The old men, the women, and children, were sent off to the forests and caverns, and the warriors prepared for battle. The Castilians paused in one of the plains clear of forests, where their horses could be of use. They made prisoners of several of the natives, and tried to learn from them the plans and forces of the enemy. They applied tortures for the purpose, but in vain, so devoted was the loyalty of these people to their caciques. The Spaniards penetrated into the interior. They found the warriors of several towns assembled in one, and drawn up in the streets with their bows and arrows, but perfectly naked, and without defensive armor. They uttered tremendous yells, and discharged a shower of arrows; but from such a distance, that they fell short of their foe. The Spaniards replied with their cross-bows, and with two or three arquebuses, for at this time they had but few firearms. When the Indians saw several of their comrades fall dead, they took to flight, rarely waiting for the attack with swords: some of the wounded, in whose bodies the arrows from the cross-bows had penetrated to the very feather, drew them out with their hands, broke them with their teeth, and hurling them at the Spaniards with impotent fury, fell dead upon the spot.

The whole force of the Indians was routed and dispersed, each family, or band of neighbors, fled in its own direction, and concealed itself in the fastness of the mountains. The Spaniards pursued them, but found the chase difficult amidst the close forests, and the broken and stony heights. They took several prisoners as guides, and inflicted incredible torments on them, to compel them to betray their countrymen. They drove them before them, secured by cords fastened round their necks; and some

of them, as they passed along the brinks of precipices, suddenly threw themselves headlong down, in hopes of dragging after them the Spaniards. When at length the pursuers came upon the unhappy Indians in their concealments, they spared neither age nor sex; even pregnant women, and mothers with infants in their arms, fell beneath their merciless swords. The cold-blooded acts of cruelty which followed this first slaughter, would be shocking to relate.

Hence Esquibel marched to attack the town where Cotabanama resided, and where that cacique had collected a great force to resist him. He proceeded direct for the place along the seacoast, and came to where two roads led up the mountain to the town. One of the roads was open and inviting; the branches of the trees being lopped, and all the underwood cleared away. Here the Indians had stationed an ambuscade to take the Spaniards in the rear. The other road was almost closed up by trees and bushes cut down and thrown across each other. Esquibel was wary and distrustful; he suspected the stratagem, and chose the encumbered road. The town was about a league and a half from the sea. The Spaniards made their way with great difficulty for the first half league. The rest of the road was free from all embarrassment, which confirmed their suspicion of a stratagem. They now advanced with great rapidity, and, having arrived near the village, suddenly turned into the other road, took the party in ambush by surprise, and made great havoc among them with their cross-bows.

The warriors now sallied from their concealment, others rushed out of the houses into the streets, and discharged flights of arrows, but from such a distance as generally to fall harmless. They then approached nearer, and hurled stones with their hands,

being unacquainted with the use of slings. Instead of being dismayed at seeing their companions fall, it rather increased their fury. An irregular battle, probably little else than wild skirmishing and bush-fighting, was kept up from two o'clock in the afternoon until night. Las Casas was present on the occasion, and, from his account, the Indians must have shown instances of great personal bravery, though the inferiority of their weapons, and the want of all defensive armor, rendered their valor totally ineffectual. As the evening shut in, their hostilities gradually ceased, and they disappeared in the profound gloom and close thickets of the surrounding forest. A deep silence succeeded to their yells and war-whoops, and throughout the night the Spaniards remained in undisturbed possession of the village.

CHAPTER IV.

CLOSE OF THE WAR WITH HIGUEY.—FATE OF COTABANAMA.

[1504.]

On the morning after the battle, not an Indian was to be seen. Finding that even their great chief, Cotabanama, was incapable of vying with the prowess of the white men, they had given up the contest in despair, and fled to the mountains. The Spaniards, separating into small parties, hunted them with the utmost diligence; their object was to seize the caciques, and, above all, Cotabanama. They explored all the glens and concealed paths leading into the wild recesses where the fugitives had taken refuge. The Indians were cautious and stealthy in their mode of retreating, treading in each other's foot-prints, so that twenty would make no more track than one, and stepping so lightly as scarce to disturb the herbage; yet there were Spaniards so skilled in hunting Indians, that they could trace them even by the turn of a withered leaf, and among the confused tracks of a thousand animals.

They could scent afar off, also, the smoke of the fires which the Indians made whenever they halted, and thus they would come upon them in their most secret haunts. Sometimes they would hunt down a straggling Indian, and compel him, by tor

ments, to betray the hiding-place of his companions, binding him and driving him before them as a guide. Wherever they discovered one of these places of refuge, filled with the aged and the infirm, with feeble women and helpless children, they massacred them without mercy. They wished to inspire terror throughout the land, and to frighten the whole tribe into submission. They cut off the hands of those whom they took roving at large, and sent them, as they said, to deliver them as letters to their friends, demanding their surrender. Numberless were those, says Las Casas, whose hands were amputated in this manner, and many of them sank down and died by the way, through anguish and loss of blood.

The conquerors delighted in exercising strange and ingenious cruelties. They mingled horrible levity with their blood-thirstiness. They erected gibbets long and low, so that the feet of the sufferers might reach the ground, and their death be lingering. They hanged thirteen together, in reverence, says the indignant Las Casas, of our blessed Saviour and the twelve apostles. While their victims were suspended, and still living, they hacked them with their swords, to prove the strength of their arms and the edge of their weapons. They wrapped them in dry straw, and setting fire to it, terminated their existence by the fiercest agony.

These are horrible details, yet a veil is drawn over others still more detestable. They are related circumstantially by Las Casas, who was an eye-witness. He was young at the time, but records them in his advanced years. "All these things," said the venerable Bishop, "and others revolting to human nature, did my own eyes behold; and now I almost fear to repeat them, scarce believing myself, or whether I have not dreamt them."*

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 17, MS.

These details would have been withheld from the present work as disgraceful to human nature, and from an unwillingness to advance any thing which might convey a stigma upon a brave and generous nation. But it would be a departure from historical veracity, having the documents before my eyes, to pass silently over transactions so atrocious, and vouched for by witnesses beyond all suspicion of falsehood. Such occurrences show the extremity to which human cruelty may extend, when stimulated by avidity of gain; by a thirst of vengeance; or even by a perverted zeal in the holy cause of religion. Every nation has in turn furnished proofs of this disgraceful truth. As in the present instance, they are commonly the crimes of individuals rather than of the nation. Yet it behooves governments to keep a vigilant eye upon those to whom they delegate power in remote and helpless colonies. It is the imperious duty of the historian to place these matters upon record, that they may serve as warning beacons to future generations.

Juan de Esquibel found that, with all his severities, it would be impossible to subjugate the tribe of Higuey, as long as the cacique Cotabanama was at large. That chieftain had retired to the little island of Saona, about two leagues from the coast of Higuey, in the centre of which, amidst a labyrinth of rocks and forests, he had taken shelter with his wife and children in a vast cavern.

A caravel, recently arrived from the city of San Domingo with supplies for the camp, was employed by Esquibel to entrap the cacique. He knew that the latter kept a vigilant look-out, stationing scouts upon the lofty rocks of his island to watch the movements of the caravel. Esquibel departed by night, therefore, in the vessel, with fifty followers, and keeping under the

deep shadows cast by the land, arrived at Saona unperceived, at the dawn of morning. Here he anchored close in with the shore, hid by its cliffs and forests, and landed forty men, before the spies of Cotabanama had taken their station. Two of these were surprised and brought to Esquibel, who, having learnt from them that the cacique was at hand, poniarded one of the spies, and bound the other, making him serve as guide.

A number of Spaniards ran in advance, each anxious to signalize himself by the capture of the cacique. They came to two roads, and the whole party pursued that to the right, excepting one Juan Lopez, a powerful man, skillful in Indian warfare. He proceeded in a footpath to the left, winding among little hills, so thickly wooded, that it was impossible to see any one at the distance of half a bow-shot. Suddenly, in a narrow pass, overshadowed by rocks and trees, he encountered twelve Indian warriors, armed with bows and arrows, and following each other in single file according to their custom. The Indians were confounded at the sight of Lopez, imagining that there must be a party of soldiers behind him. They might readily have transfixed him with their arrows, but they had lost all presence of mind. He demanded their chieftain. They replied that he was behind, and, opening to let him pass, Lopez beheld the cacique in the rear. At sight of the Spaniard, Cotabanama bent his gigantic bow, and was on the point of launching one of his three-pronged arrows, but Lopez rushed upon him and wounded him with his sword. The other Indians, struck with panic, had already fled. Cotabanama, dismayed at the keenness of the sword, cried out that he was Juan de Esquibel, claiming respect as having exchanged names with the Spanish commander. Lopez seized him with one hand by the hair, and with the other aimed a thrust at his body; but

the cacique struck down the sword with his hand, and, grappling with his antagonist, threw him with his back upon the rocks. As they were both men of great power, the struggle was long and violent. The sword was beneath them, but Cotabanama, seizing the Spaniard by the throat with his mighty hand, attempted to strangle him. The sound of the contest, brought the other Spaniards to the spot. They found their companion writhing and gasping, and almost dead, in the gripe of the gigantic Indian. They seized the cacique, bound him, and carried him captive to a deserted Indian village in the vicinity. They found the way to his secret cave, but his wife and children having received notice of his capture by the fugitive Indians, had taken refuge in another part of the island. In the cavern was found the chain with which a number of Indian captives had been bound, who had risen upon and slain three Spaniards who had them in charge, and had made their escape to this island. There were also the swords of the same Spaniards, which they had brought off as trophies to their cacique. The chain was now employed to manacle Cotabanama.

The Spaniards prepared to execute the chieftain on the spot, in the centre of the deserted village. For this purpose a pyre was built of logs of wood laid crossways, in form of a gridiron, on which he was to be slowly broiled to death. On further consultation, however, they were induced to forego the pleasure of this horrible sacrifice. Perhaps they thought the cacique too important a personage to be executed thus obscurely. Granting him, therefore, a transient reprieve, they conveyed him to the caravel, and sent him, bound with heavy chains, to San Domingo. Ovando saw him in his power, and incapable of doing further harm; but he had not the magnanimity to forgive a fallen enemy

whose only crime was the defence of his native soil and lawful territory. He ordered him to be publicly hanged like a common culprit.* In this ignominious manner was the cacique Cotabanama executed, the last of the five sovereign princes of Hayti. His death was followed by the complete subjugation of his people, and sealed the last struggle of the natives against their oppressors. The island was almost unpeopled of its original inhabitants, and meek and mournful submission and mute despair settled upon the scanty remnant that survived.

Such was the ruthless system which had been pursued, during the absence of the admiral, by the commander Ovando; this man of boasted prudence and moderation, who was sent to reform the abuses of the island, and above all, to redress the wrongs of the natives. The system of Columbus may have borne hard upon the Indians, born and brought up in untasked freedom, but it was never cruel nor sanguinary. He inflicted no wanton massacres nor vindictive punishments; his desire was to cherish and civilize the Indians, and to render them useful subjects; not to oppress, and persecute, and destroy them. When he beheld the desolation that had swept them from the land during his suspension from authority, he could not restrain the strong expression of his feelings. In a letter written to the king after his return to Spain, he thus expresses himself on the subject. "The Indians of Hispaniola were and are the riches of the island; for it is they who cultivate and make the bread and the provisions for the Christians; who dig the gold from the mines, and perform all the offices and labors both of men and beasts. I am informed that, since I left this island, six parts out of seven of the natives are dead; all through ill treatment and inhumanity; some by the sword, others

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 18.

by blows and cruel usage, others through hunger. The greater part have perished in the mountains and glens, whither they had fled, from not being able to support the labor imposed upon them." For his own part, he added, although he had sent many Indians to Spain to be sold, it was always with a view to their being instructed in the Christian faith, and in civilized arts and usages, and afterwards sent back to their island to assist in civilizing their countrymen.*

The brief view that has been given of the policy of Ovando on certain points on which Columbus was censured, may enable the reader to judge more correctly of the conduct of the latter. It is not to be measured by the standard of right and wrong established in the present more enlightened age. We must consider him in connection with the era in which he lived. By comparing his measures with those men of his own times praised for their virtues and abilities, placed in precisely his own situation, and placed there expressly to correct his faults, we shall be the better able to judge how virtuously and wisely, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, he may be considered to have governed.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 36.

BOOK XVIII.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FOR SAN DOMINGO.—HIS RETURN TO SPAIN.

The arrival at Jamaica of the two vessels under the command of Salcedo, had caused a joyful reverse in the situation of Columbus. He hastened to leave the wreck in which he had been so long immured, and hoisting his flag on board of one of the ships, felt as if the career of enterprise and glory were once more open to him. The late partisans of Porras, when they heard of the arrival of the ships, came wistful and abject to the harbor, doubting how far they might trust to the magnanimity of a man whom they had so greatly injured, and who had now an opportunity of vengeance. The generous mind, however, never harbors revenge in the hour of returning prosperity; but feels noble satisfaction in sharing its happiness even with its enemies. Columbus forgot, in his present felicity, all that he had suffered from these men; he ceased to consider them enemies, now that they had lost the power to injure; and he not only fulfilled all that he had promised them, by taking them on board the ships, but relieved their necessities from his own purse, until their return to Spain; and

afterwards took unwearied pains to recommend them to the bounty of the sovereigns. Francisco Porras alone continued a prisoner, to be tried by the tribunals of his country.

Oviedo assures us that the Indians wept when they beheld the departure of the Spaniards; still considering them as beings from the skies. From the admiral, it is true, they had experienced nothing but just and gentle treatment, and continual benefits; and the idea of his immediate influence with the Deity, manifested on the memorable occasion of the eclipse, may have made them consider him as more than human, and his presence as propitious to their island; but it is not easy to believe that a lawless gang like that of Porras, could have been ranging for months among their villages, without giving cause for the greatest joy at their depar ture.

On the 28th of June the vessels set sail for San Domingo. The adverse winds and currents which had opposed Columbus throughout this ill-starred expedition, still continued to harass him. After a weary struggle of several weeks, he reached, on the 3d of August, the little island of Beata, on the coast of Hispaniola. Between this place and San Domingo the currents are so violent, that vessels are often detained months, waiting for sufficient wind to enable them to stem the stream. Hence Columbus dispatched a letter by land to Ovando, to inform him of his approach, and to remove certain absurd suspicions of his views, which he had learnt from Salcedo were still entertained by the governor; who feared his arrival in the island might produce factions and disturbances. In this letter he expresses, with his usual warmth and simplicity, the joy he felt at his deliverance, which was so great, he says, that, since the arrival of Diego de Salcedo with succor he had scarcely been able to sleep. The

letter had barely time to precede the writer, for, a favorable wind springing up, the vessels again made sail, and, on the 13th of August, anchored in the harbor of San Domingo.

If it is the lot of prosperity to awaken envy and excite detraction, it is certainly the lot of misfortune to atone for a multitude of faults. San Domingo had been the very hot-bed of sedition against Columbus in the day of his power; he had been hurried from it in ignominious chains, amidst the shouts and taunts of the triumphant rabble; he had been excluded from its harbor when, as commander of a squadron, he craved shelter from an impending tempest; but now that he arrived in its waters, a broken down and shipwrecked man, all past hostility was overpowered by the popular sense of his late disasters. There was a momentary burst of enthusiasm in his favor; what had been denied to his merits was granted to his misfortunes; and even the envious, appeased by his present reverses, seemed to forgive him for having once been so triumphant.

The governor and principal inhabitants came forth to meet him, and received him with signal distinction. He was lodged as a guest in the house of Ovando, who treated him with the utmost courtesy and attention. The governor was a shrewd and discreet man, and much of a courtier; but there were causes of jealousy and distrust between him and Columbus too deep to permit of cordial intercourse. The admiral and his son Fernando always pronounced the civility of Ovando overstrained and hypocritical; intended to obliterate the remembrance of past neglect, and to conceal lurking enmity. While he professed the utmost friendship and sympathy for the admiral, he set at liberty the traitor Porras, who was still a prisoner, to be taken to Spain for trial. He also talked of punishing those of the admiral's people who

had taken arms in his defence, and in the affray at Jamaica had killed several of the mutineers. These circumstances were loudly complained of by Columbus; but, in fact, they rose out of a question of jurisdiction between him and the governor. Their powers were so undefined as to clash with each other, and they were both disposed to be extremely punctilious. Ovando assumed a right to take cognizance of all transactions at Jamaica; as happening within the limits of his government, which included all the islands and Terra Firma. Columbus, on the other hand, asserted the absolute command, and the jurisdiction both civil and criminal given to him by the sovereigns, over all persons who sailed in his expedition, from the time of departure until their return to Spain. To prove this, he produced his letter of instructions. The governor heard him with great courtesy and a smiling countenance; but observed, that the letter of instructions gave him no authority within the bounds of his government.* He relinquished the idea, however, of investigating the conduct of the followers of Columbus, and sent Porras to Spain, to be examined by the board which had charge of the affairs of the Indies.

The sojourn of Columbus at San Domingo was but little calculated to yield him satisfaction. He was grieved at the desolation of the island by the oppressive treatment of the natives, and the horrible massacre which had been perpetrated by Ovando and his agents. He had fondly hoped, at one time, to render the natives civilized, industrious, and tributary subjects to the crown, and to derive from their well-regulated labor a great and steady revenue. How different had been the event! The five great tribes which peopled the mountains and the valleys at the time of

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego, Seville, Nov. 21, 1504. Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

the discovery, and rendered, by their mingled towns and villages and tracts of cultivation, the rich levels of the Vegas so many "painted gardens," had almost all passed away, and the native princes had perished chiefly by violent or ignominious deaths. Columbus regarded the affairs of the island with a different eye from Ovando. He had a paternal feeling for its prosperity, and his fortunes were implicated in its judicious management. He complained, in subsequent letters to the sovereigns, that all the public affairs were ill conducted; that the ore collected lay unguarded in large quantities in houses slightly built and thatched, inviting depredation; that Ovando was unpopular, the people were dissolute, and the property of the crown and the security of the island in continual risk from mutiny and sedition.* While he saw all this, he had no power to interfere, and any observation or remonstrance on his part was ill received by the governor.

He found his own immediate concerns in great confusion. His rents and dues were either uncollected, or he could not obtain a clear account and a full liquidation of them. Whatever he could collect was appropriated to the fitting out of the vessels which were to convey himself and his crews to Spain. He accuses Ovando, in his subsequent letters, of having neglected, if not sacrificed, his interests during his long absence, and of having impeded those who were appointed to attend to his concerns. That he had some grounds for these complaints would appear from two letters still extant,† written by Queen Isabella to Ovando, on the 27th of November, 1503, in which she informs him of the complaint of Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, that he

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego, dated Seville 3d Dec., 1504. Navarrete, tom. i. p. 341.

† Navarrete, Colec., tom. ii., decad. 151, 152.

was impeded in collecting the rents of the admiral; and expressly commands Ovando to observe the capitulations granted to Columbus; to respect his agents, and to facilitate, instead of obstructing his concerns. These letters, while they imply ungenerous conduct on the part of the governor towards his illustrious predecessor, evince likewise the personal interest taken by Isabella in the affairs of Columbus, during his absence. She had, in fact, signified her displeasure at his being excluded from the port of San Domingo, when he applied there for succor for his squadron, and for shelter from a storm; and had censured Ovando for not taking his advice and detaining the fleet of Bobadilla, by which it would have escaped its disastrous fate.* And here it may be observed, that the sanguinary acts of Ovando towards the natives, in particular the massacre at Xaragua, and the execution of the unfortunate Anacaona, awakened equal horror and indignation in Isabella; she was languishing on her death-bed when she received the intelligence, and with her dying breath she exacted a promise from King Ferdinand that Ovando should immediately be recalled from his government. The promise was tardily and reluctantly fulfilled, after an interval of about four years, and not until induced by other circumstances; for Ovando contrived to propitiate the monarch, by forcing a revenue from the island.

The continual misunderstandings between the admiral and the governor, though always qualified on the part of the latter with great complaisance, induced Columbus to hasten as much as possible his departure from the island. The ship in which he had returned from Jamaica was repaired and fitted out, and put under the command of the Adelantado; another vessel was freighted, in which Columbus embarked with his son and his do-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. v. cap. 12.

mestics. The greater part of his late crews remained at San Domingo; as they were in great poverty, he relieved their necessities from his own purse, and advanced the funds necessary for the voyage home of those who chose to return. Many thus relieved by his generosity had been among the most violent of the rebels.

On the 12th of September, he set sail; but had scarcely left the harbor when, in a sudden squall, the mast of his ship was carried away. He immediately went with his family on board of the vessel commanded by the Adelantado, and, sending back the damaged ship to port, continued on his course. Throughout the voyage he experienced the most tempestuous weather. In one storm the mainmast was sprung in four places. He was confined to his bed at the time by the gout; by his advice, however, and the activity of the Adelantado, the damage was skillfully repaired; the mast was shortened; the weak parts were fortified by wood taken from the castles or cabins, which the vessels in those days carried on the prow and stern; and the whole was well secured by cords. They were still more damaged in a succeeding tempest; in which the ship sprung her foremast. In this crippled state, they had to traverse seven hundred leagues of a stormy ocean. Fortune continued to persecute Columbus to the end of this, his last, and most disastrous expedition. For several weeks he was tempest-tost—suffering at the same time the most excruciating pains from his malady—until, on the seventh day of November, his crazy and shattered bark anchored in the harbor of San Lucar. Hence he had himself conveyed to Seville, where he hoped to enjoy repose of mind and body, and to recruit his health after such a long series of fatigues, anxieties, and hardships.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 108. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 36.

CHAPTER II.

ILLNESS OF COLUMBUS AT SEVILLE.—APPLICATION TO THE CROWN FOR A RESTITUTION OF HIS HONORS.—DEATH OF ISABELLA.

[1504.]

BROKEN by age and infirmities, and worn down by the toils and hardships of his recent expedition, Columbus had looked forward to Seville as to a haven of rest, where he might repose awhile from his troubles. Care and sorrow, however, followed him by sea and land. In varying the scene he but varied the nature of his distress. "Wearisome days and nights" were appointed to him for the remainder of his life; and the very margin of his grave was destined to be strewed with thorns.

On arriving at Seville, he found all his affairs in confusion. Ever since he had been sent home in chains from San Domingo, when his house and effects had been taken possession of by Bobadilla, his rents and dues had never been properly collected; and such as had been gathered had been retained in the hands of the governor Ovando. "I have much vexation from the governor," says he, in a letter to his son Diego.* "All tell me that I have there eleven or twelve thousand castellanos; and I have not received a quarto. * * * I know well, that, since my departure,

* Let. Seville, 13 Dec., 1504. Navarrete, v. i. p. 343.

he must have received upwards of five thousand castellanos." He entreated that a letter might be written by the king, commanding the payment of these arrears without delay; for his agents would not venture even to speak to Ovando on the subject, unless empowered by a letter from the sovereign.

Columbus was not of a mercenary spirit; but his rank and situation required large expenditure. The world thought him in the possession of sources of inexhaustible wealth; but, as yet, those sources had furnished him but precarious and scanty streams. His last voyage had exhausted his finances, and involved him in perplexities. All that he had been able to collect of the money due to him in Hispaniola, to the amount of twelve hundred castellanos, had been expended in bringing home many of his late crew, who were in distress; and for the greater part of the sum the crown remained his debtor. While struggling to obtain his mere pecuniary dues, he was absolutely suffering a degree of penury. He repeatedly urges the necessity of economy to his son Diego, until he can obtain a restitution of his property, and the payment of his arrears. "I receive nothing of the revenue due to me," says he, in one letter; "I live by borrowing." "Little have I profited," he adds, in another, "by twenty years of service, with such toils and perils; since, at present, I do not own a roof in Spain. If I desire to eat or sleep, I have no resort but an inn; and, for the most times, have not wherewithal to pay my bill."

Yet in the midst of these personal distresses, he was more solicitous for the payment of his seamen than of himself. He wrote strongly and repeatedly to the sovereigns, entreating the discharge of their arrears, and urged his son Diego, who was at court, to exert himself in their behalf. "They are poor," said

he, "and it is now nearly three years since they left their homes. They have endured infinite toils and perils, and they bring invaluable tidings, for which their majesties ought to give thanks to God and rejoice." Notwithstanding his generous solicitude for these men, he knew several of them to have been his enemies; nay, that some of them were at this very time disposed to do him harm rather than good; such was the magnanimity of his spirit and his forgiving disposition.

The same zeal, also, for the interests of his sovereigns, which had ever actuated his loyal mind, mingled with his other causes of solicitude. He represented in his letter to the king, the mismanagement of the royal rents in Hispaniola, under the administration of Ovando. Immense quantities of ore lay unprotected in slightly-built houses, and liable to depredations. It required a person of vigor, and one who had an individual interest in the property of the island, to restore its affairs to order, and draw from it the immense revenues which it was capable of yielding; and Columbus plainly intimated that he was the proper person.

In fact, as to himself, it was not so much pecuniary indemnification that he sought, as the restoration of his offices and dignities. He regarded them as the trophies of his illustrious achievements; he had received the royal promise that he should be reinstated in them; and he felt that as long as they were withheld, a tacit censure rested upon his name. Had he not been proudly impatient on this subject he would have belied the loftiest part of his character; for he who can be indifferent to the wreath of triumph, is deficient in the noble ambition which incites to glorious deeds.

The unsatisfactory replies received to his letters disquieted his mind. He knew that he had active enemies at court ready to

turn all things to his disadvantage, and felt the importance of being there in person to defeat their machinations: but his infirmities detained him at Seville. He made an attempt to set forth on the journey, but the severity of the winter and the virulence of his malady obliged him to relinquish it in despair. All that he could do was to reiterate his letters to the sovereigns, and to entreat the intervention of his few but faithful friends. He feared the disastrous occurrences of the last voyage might be represented to his prejudice. The great object of the expedition, the discovery of a strait opening from the Caribbean to a southern sea, had failed. The secondary object, the acquisition of gold, had not been completed. He had discovered the gold mines of Veragua, it is true; but he had brought home no treasure; because, as he said, in one of his letters, "I would not rob nor outrage the country; since reason requires that it should be settled, and then the gold may be procured without violence."

He was especially apprehensive that the violent scenes in the island of Jamaica might, by the perversity of his enemies, and the effrontery of the delinquents, be wrested into matters of accusation against him, as had been the case with the rebellion of Roldan. Porras, the ringleader of the late faction, had been sent home by Ovando, to appear before the board of the Indies; but without any written process, setting forth the offences charged against him. While at Jamaica, Columbus had ordered an inquest of the affair to be taken; but the notary of the squadron who took it, and the papers which he drew up, were on board of the ship in which the admiral had sailed from Hispaniola, but which had put back dismasted. No cognizance of the case, therefore, was taken by the council of the Indies; and Porras went at large, armed with the power and the disposition to do mischief

Being related to Morales, the royal treasurer, he had access to people in place, and an opportunity of enlisting their opinions and prejudices on his side. Columbus wrote to Morales, inclosing a copy of the petition which the rebels had sent to him when in Jamaica, in which they acknowledged their culpability, and implored his forgiveness; and he entreated the treasurer not to be swayed by the representations of his relative, nor to pronounce an opinion unfavorable to him, until he had an opportunity of being heard.

The faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez was at this time at the court, as well as Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, and an active friend of Columbus named Geronimo. They could bear the most important testimony as to his conduct, and he wrote to his son Diego to call upon them for their good offices. "I trust," said he, "that the truth and diligence of Diego Mendez will be of as much avail as the lies of Porras." Nothing can surpass the affecting earnestness and simplicity of the general declaration of loyalty, contained in one of his letters. "I have served their majesties," says he, "with as much zeal and diligence as if it had been to gain Paradise; and if I have failed in any thing, it has been because my knowledge and powers went no further."

While reading these touching appeals, we can scarcely realize the fact, that the dejected individual thus wearily and vainly applying for unquestionable rights, and pleading almost like a culprit, in cases wherein he had been flagrantly injured, was the same who but a few years previously had been received at this very court with almost regal honors, and idolized as a national benefactor; that this, in a word, was Columbus, the discoverer of the New World; broken in health, and impoverished in his old days by his very discoveries.

At length the caravel bringing the official proceedings relative to the brothers Porras arrived at the Algarves, in Portugal, and Columbus looked forward with hope that all matters would soon be placed in a proper light. His anxiety to get to court became every day more intense. A litter was provided to convey him thither, and was actually at the door, but the inclemency of the weather and his increasing infirmities obliged him again to abandon the journey. His resource of letter-writing began to fail him: he could only write at night, for in the daytime the severity of his malady deprived him of the use of his hands. The tidings from the court were every day more and more adverse to his hopes; the intrigues of his enemies were prevailing; the cold-hearted Ferdinand treated all his applications with indifference; the generous Isabella lay dangerously ill. On her justice and magnanimity he still relied for the full restoration of his rights, and the redress of all his grievances. "May it please the Holy Trinity," says he, "to restore our sovereign queen to health; for by her will every thing be adjusted which is now in confusion." Alas! while writing that letter, his noble benefactress was a corpse!

The health of Isabella had long been undermined by the shocks of repeated domestic calamities. The death of her only son, the prince Juan; of her beloved daughter and bosom friend, the princess Isabella; and of her grandson and prospective heir, the prince Miguel, had been three cruel wounds to a heart full of the tenderest sensibility. To these was added the constant grief caused by the evident infirmity of intellect of her daughter Juana, and the domestic unhappiness of that princess with her husband, the archduke Philip. The desolation which walks through palaces admits not the familiar sympathies and sweet consolations which alleviate the sorrows of common life. Isabella pined in state,

amidst the obsequious homages of a court, surrounded by the trophies of a glorious and successful reign, and placed at the summit of earthly grandeur. A deep and incurable melancholy settled upon her, which undermined her constitution, and gave a fatal acuteness to her bodily maladies. After four months of illness, she died on the 26th of November, 1504, at Medina del Campo, in the fifty-fourth year of her age; but long before her eyes closed upon the world, her heart had closed on all its pomps and vanities. "Let my body," said she in her will, "be interred in the monastery of San Francisco, which is in the Alhambra of the city of Granada, in a low sepulchre, without any monument except a plain stone, with the inscription cut on it. But I desire and command, that if the king, my lord, should choose a sepulchre in any church or monastery in any other part or place of these my kingdoms, my body be transported thither, and buried beside the body of his highness; so that the union we have enjoyed while living, and which, through the mercy of God, we hope our souls will experience in heaven, may be represented by our bodies in the earth."*

Such was one of several passages in the will of this admirable woman, which bespoke the chastened humility of her heart; and in which, as has been well observed, the affections of conjugal love were delicately entwined with piety, and with the most tender melancholy.† She was one of the purest spirits that ever

* The dying command of Isabella has been obeyed. The author of this work has seen her tomb in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Granada, in which her remains are interred with those of Ferdinand. Their effigies, sculptured in white marble, lie side by side on a magnificent sepulchre. The altar of the chapel is adorned with bas reliefs representing the conquest and surrender of Granada.

† Elogio de la Reina Catolica por D. Diego Clemencin. Illustration 19.

ruled over the destinies of a nation. Had she been spared, her benignant vigilance would have prevented many a scene of horror in the colonization of the New World, and might have softened the lot of its native inhabitants. As it is, her fair name will ever shine with celestial radiance in the dawning of its history.

The news of the death of Isabella reached Columbus when he was writing a letter to his son Diego. He notices it in a postscript or memorandum, written in the haste and brevity of the moment, but in beautifully touching and mournful terms. "A memorial," he writes, "for thee, my dear son Diego, of what is at present to be done. The principal thing is to commend affectionately, and with great devotion, the soul of the queen our sovereign to God. Her life was always catholic and holy, and prompt to all things in his holy service: for this reason we may rest assured that she is received into his glory, and beyond the cares of this rough and weary world. The next thing is to watch and labor in all matters for the service of our sovereign the king, and to endeavor to alleviate his grief. His majesty is the head of Christendom. Remember the proverb which says, when the head suffers all the members suffer. Therefore all good Christians should pray for his health and long life; and we, who are in his employ, ought more than others to do this with all study and diligence."*

It is impossible to read this mournful letter without being moved by the simply eloquent yet artless language, in which Columbus expresses his tenderness for the memory of his benefactress, his weariness under the gathering cares and ills of life, and his persevering and enduring loyalty towards the sovereign who was so ungratefully neglecting him. It is in these unstudied and confidential letters that we read the heart of Columbus.

* Letter to his son Diego, Dec. 3, 1504.

CHAPTER III.

COLUMBUS ARRIVES AT COURT.—FRUITLESS APPLICATION TO THE KING FOR REDRESS.

[1505.]

The death of Isabella was a fatal blow to the fortunes of Columbus. While she lived, he had every thing to anticipate from her high sense of justice, her regard for her royal word, her gratitude for his services, and her admiration of his character. With her illness, however, his interests had languished, and when she died, he was left to the justice and generosity of Ferdinand!

During the remainder of the winter and a part of the spring, he continued at Seville, detained by painful illness, and endeavoring to obtain redress from the government by ineffectual letters. His brother the Adelantado, who supported him with his accustomed fondness and devotion through all his trials, proceeded to court to attend to his interests, taking with him the admiral's younger son Fernando, then aged about seventeen. The latter, the affectionate father repeatedly represents to his son Diego as a man in understanding and conduct, though but a stripling in years; and inculcates the strongest fraternal attachment, alluding to his own brethren with one of those simply eloquent and affecting expressions which stamp his heart upon his letters. "To thy

brother conduct thyself as the elder brother should unto the younger. Thou hast no other, and I praise God that this is such a one as thou dost need. Ten brothers would not be too many for thee. Never have I found a better friend to right or left, than my brothers."

Among the persons whom Columbus employed at this time in his missions to the court, was Amerigo Vespucci. He describes him as a worthy but unfortunate man, who had not profited as much as he deserved by his undertakings, and who had always been disposed to render him service. His object in employing him appears to have been to prove the value of his last voyage, and that he had been in the most opulent parts of the New World; Vespucci having since touched upon the same coast, in a voyage with Alonzo de Ojeda.

One circumstance occurred at this time which shed a gleam of hope and consolation over his gloomy prospects. Diego de Deza, who had been for some time bishop of Palencia, was expected at court. This was the same worthy friar who had aided him to advocate his theory before the board of learned men at Salamanca, and had assisted him with his purse when making his proposals to the Spanish court. He had just been promoted and made archbishop of Seville, but had not yet been installed in office. Columbus directs his son Diego to intrust his interests to this worthy prelate. "Two things," says he, "require particular attention. Ascertain whether the queen, who is now with God, has said any thing concerning me in her testament, and stimulate the bishop of Palencia, he who was the cause that their highnesses obtained possession of the Indies, who induced me to remain in Castile when I was on the road to leave it."*

* Letter of December 21, 1504, Navarrete, tom. i. p. 346.

In another letter he says, "If the bishop of Palencia has arrived, or should arrive, tell him how much I have been gratified by his prosperity, and that if I come, I shall lodge with his grace, even though he should not invite me, for we must return to our ancient fraternal affection."

The incessant applications of Columbus, both by letter and by the intervention of friends, appear to have been listened to with cool indifference. No compliance was yielded to his requests, and no deference was paid to his opinions, on various points, concerning which he interested himself. New instructions were sent out to Ovando, but not a word of their purport was mentioned to the admiral. It was proposed to send out three bishops, and he entreated in vain to be heard previous to their election. In short, he was not in any way consulted in the affairs of the New World. He felt deeply this neglect, and became every day more impatient of his absence from court. To enable himself to perform the journey with more ease, he applied for permission to use a mule, a royal ordinance having prohibited the employment of those animals under the saddle, in consequence of their universal use having occasioned a decline in the breed of horses. A royal permission was accordingly granted to Columbus, in consideration that his age and infirmities incapacitated him from riding on horseback; but it was a considerable time before the state of his health would permit him to avail himself of that privilege.

The foregoing particulars, gleaned from letters of Columbus recently discovered, show the real state of his affairs, and the mental and bodily affliction sustained by him during his winter's residence at Seville, on his return from his last disastrous voyage. He has generally been represented as reposing there from his

toils and troubles. Never was honorable repose more merited, more desired, and less enjoyed.

It was not until the month of May that he was able, in company with his brother the Adelantado, to accomplish his journey to court, at that time held at Segovia. He, who but a few years before had entered the city of Barcelona in triumph, attended by the nobility and chivalry of Spain, and hailed with rapture by the multitude, now arrived within the gates of Segovia, a way-worn, melancholy, and neglected man; oppressed more by sorrow than even by his years and infirmities. When he presented himself at court, he met with none of that distinguished attention, that cordial kindness, that cherishing sympathy, which his unparalleled services and his recent sufferings had merited.*

The selfish Ferdinand had lost sight of his past services, in what appeared to him the inconvenience of his present demands. He received him with many professions of kindness: but with those cold ineffectual smiles, which pass like wintry sunshine over the countenance, and convey no warmth to the heart.

The admiral now gave a particular account of his late voyage; describing the great tract of Terra Firma, which he had explored, and the riches of the province of Veragua. He related also the disasters sustained in the island of Jamaica; the insurrection of the Porras and their band; and all the other griefs and troubles of this unfortunate expedition. He had but a cold-hearted auditor in the king; and the benignant Isabella was no more at hand to soothe him with a smile of kindness, or a tear of sympathy. "I know not," says the venerable Las Casas, "what could cause this dislike and this want of princely countenance in the king,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 37. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. vi. cap. 13.

towards one who had rendered him such pre-eminent benefits; unless it was that his mind was swayed by the false testimonies which had been brought against the admiral; of which I have been enabled to learn something from persons much in favor with the sovereigns."*

After a few days had elapsed, Columbus urged his suit in orm; reminding the king of all that he had done, and all that had been promised him under the royal word and seal, and supplicating that the restitutions and indemnifications which had been so frequently solicited, might be awarded to him; offering in return to serve his majesty devotedly for the short time he had yet to live; and trusting, from what he felt within him, and from what he thought he knew with certainty, to render services which should surpass all that he had yet performed a hundred-fold. The king, in reply, acknowledged the greatness of his merits, and the importance of his services, but observed, that, for the more satisfactory adjustment of his claims, it would be advisable to refer all points in dispute to the decision of some discreet and able person. The admiral immediately proposed as arbiter his friend the archbishop of Seville, Don Diego de Deza, one of the most able and upright men about the court, devotedly loyal, high in the confidence of the king, and one who had always taken great interest in the affairs of the New World. The king consented to the arbitration, but artfully extended it to questions which he knew would never be put at issue by Columbus; among these was his claim to the restoration of his office of viceroy. To this Columbus objected with becoming spirit, as compromising a right which was too clearly

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 37, MS.

defined and solemnly established, to be put for a moment in dispute. It was the question of rents and revenues alone, he observed, which he was willing to submit to the decision of a learned man, not that of the government of the Indies. As the monarch persisted, however, in embracing both questions in the arbitration, the proposed measure was never carried into effect.

It was, in fact, on the subject of his dignities alone that Columbus was tenacious; all other matters he considered of minor importance. In a conversation with the king he absolutely disavowed all wish of entering into any suit or pleading as to his pecuniary dues; on the contrary, he offered to put all his privileges and writings into the hands of his sovereign, and to receive out of the dues arising from them, whatever his majesty might think proper to award. All that he claimed without qualification or reserve, were his official dignities, assured to him under the royal seal with all the solemnity of a treaty. He entreated, at all events, that these matters might speedily be decided, so that he might be released from a state of miserable suspense, and enabled to retire to some quiet corner, in search of that tranquillity and repose, necessary to his fatigues and his infirmities.

To this frank appeal to his justice and generosity, Ferdinand replied with many courteous expressions, and with those general evasive promises, which beguile the ear of the court applicant, but convey no comfort to his heart. "As far as actions went," observes Las Casas, "the king not merely showed him no signs of favor, but, on the contrary, discountenanced him as much as possible; yet he was never wanting in complimentary expres sions."

Many months were passed by Columbus in unavailing solici tation, during which he continued to receive outward demonstra-

tions of respect from the king, and due attention from cardinal Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo, and other principal personages; but he had learned to appreciate and distrust the hollow civilities of a court. His claims were referred to a tribunal, called "The council of the discharges of the conscience of the deceased queen, and of the king." This is a kind of tribunal, commonly known by the name of the Junta de Descargos, composed of persons nominated by the sovereign, to superintend the accomplishment of the last will of his predecessor, and the discharge of his debts. Two consultations were held by this body, but nothing was determined. The wishes of the king were too well known to be thwarted. "It was believed," says Las Casas, "that if the king could have done so with a safe conscience, and without detriment to his fame, he would have respected few or none of the privileges which he and the queen had conceded to the admiral, and which had been so justly merited."*

Columbus still flattered himself that, his claims being of such importance, and touching a question of sovereignty, the adjustment of them might be only postponed by the king until he could consult with his daughter Juana, who had succeeded to her mother as queen of Castile, and who was daily expected from Flanders, with her husband, king Philip. He endeavored, therefore, to bear his delays with patience; but he had no longer the physical strength and glorious anticipations which once sustained him through his long application at this court. Life itself was drawing to a close.

He was once more confined to his bed by a tormenting attack of the gout, aggravated by the sorrows and disappointments which

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 37.

preyed upon his heart. From this couch of anguish he addressed one more appeal to the justice of the king. He no longer petitioned for himself: it was for his son Diego. Nor did he dwell upon his pecuniary dues; it was the honorable trophies of his services, which he wished to secure and perpetuate in his family. He entreated that his son Diego might be appointed, in his place, to the government of which he had been so wrongfully deprived. "This," he said, "is a matter which concerns my honor; as to all the rest, do as your majesty may think proper; give or withhold, as may be most for your interest, and I shall be content. I believe the anxiety caused by the delay of this affair is the principal cause of my ill health." A petition to the same purpose was presented at the same time by his son Diego, offering to take with him such persons for counselors as the king should appoint, and to be guided by their advice.

These petitions were treated by Ferdinand with his usual professions and evasions. "The more applications were made to him," observes Las Casas, "the more favorably did he reply; but still he delayed, hoping, by exhausting their patience, to induce them to wave their privileges, and accept in place thereof titles and estates in Castile." Columbus rejected all propositions of the kind with indignation, as calculated to compromise those titles which were the trophies of his achievements. He saw, however, that all further hope of redress from Ferdinand was vain. From the bed to which he was confined, he addressed a letter to his constant friend Diego de Deza, expressive of his despair. "It appears that his majesty does not think fit to fulfill that which he, with the queen, who is now in glory, promised me by word and seal. For me to contend for the contrary, would be to contend with the wind. I have done all that I could do. I

leave the rest to God, whom I have ever found propitious to me in my necessities."*

The cold and calculating Ferdinand beheld this illustrious man sinking under infirmity of body, heightened by that deferred hope which "maketh the heart sick." A little more delay, a little more disappointmeut, and a little longer infliction of ingratitude, and this loyal and generous heart would cease to beat: he should then be delivered from the just claims of a well-tried servant, who, in ceasing to be useful, was considered by him to have become importunate.

* Navarrete Colec., tom. i.

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH OF COLUMBUS.

In the midst of illness and despondency, when both life and hope were expiring in the bosom of Columbus, a new gleam was awakened and blazed up for the moment with characteristic fervor. He heard with joy of the landing of king Philip and queen Juana, who had just arrived from Flanders to take possession of their throne of Castile. In the daughter of Isabella he trusted once more to find a patroness and a friend. King Ferdinand and all the court repaired to Laredo to receive the youthful sovereigns. Columbus would gladly have done the same, but he was confined to his bed by a severe return of his malady; neither in his painful and helpless situation could he dispense with the aid and ministry of his son Diego. His brother, the Adelantado, therefore, his main dependence in all emergencies, was sent to represent him, and to present his homage and congratulations. Columbus wrote by him to the new king and queen, expressing his grief at being prevented by illness from coming in person to manifest his devotion, but begging to be considered among the most faithful of their subjects. He expressed a hope that he should receive at their hands the restitution of his honors and

estates, and assured them, that, though cruelly tortured at present by disease, he would yet be able to render them services, the like of which had never been witnessed.

Such was the last sally of his sanguine and unconquerable spirit; which, disregarding age and infirmities, and all past sorrows and disappointments, spoke from his dying bed with all the confidence of youthful hope; and talked of still greater enterprises, as if he had a long and vigorous life before him. The Adelantado took leave of his brother, whom he was never to behold again, and set out on his mission to the new sovereigns. He experienced the most gracious reception. The claims of the admiral were treated with great attention by the young king and queen, and flattering hopes were given of a speedy and prosperous termination to his suit.

In the meantime the cares and troubles of Columbus were drawing to a close. The momentary fire which had reanimated him was soon quenched by accumulating infirmities. Immediately after the departure of the Adelantado, his illness increased in violence. His last voyage had shattered beyond repair a frame already worn and wasted by a life of hardship; and continual anxieties robbed him of that sweet repose so necessary to recruit the weariness and debility of age. The cold ingratitude of his sovereign chilled his heart. The continued suspension of his honors, and the enmity and defamation experienced at every turn, seemed to throw a shadow over that glory which had been the great object of his ambition. This shadow, it is true, could be but of transient duration; but it is difficult for the most illustrious man to look beyond the present cloud which may obscure his fame, and anticipate its permanent lustre in the admiration of posterity.

Being admonished by failing strength and increasing sufferings that his end was approaching, he prepared to leave his affairs in order for the benefit of his successors.

It is said that on the 4th of May he wrote an informal testamentary codicil on the blank page of a little breviary, given him by Pope Alexander VI. In this he bequeathed that book to the republic of Genoa, which he also appointed successor to his privileges and dignities, on the extinction of his male line. He directed likewise the erection of an hospital in that city with the produce of his possessions in Italy. The authenticity of this document is questioned, and has become a point of warm contest among commentators. It is not, however, of much importance. The paper is such as might readily have been written by a person like Columbus in the paroxysm of disease, when he imagined his end suddenly approaching, and shows the affection with which his thoughts were bent on his native city. It is termed among commentators a military codicil, because testamentary dispositions of this kind are executed by the soldier at the point of death, without the usual formalities required by the civil law. About two weeks afterwards, on the eve of his death, he executed a final and regularly authenticated codicil, in which he bequeathed his dignities and estates with better judgment.

In these last and awful moments, when the soul has but a brief space in which to make up its accounts between heaven and earth, all dissimulation is at an end, and we read unequivocal evidences of character. The last codicil of Columbus, made at the very verge of the grave, is stamped with his ruling passion and his benignant virtues. He repeats and enforces several clauses of his original testament, constituting his son Diego his universal heir. The entailed inheritance, or mayorasgo, in case he died

without male issue, was to go to his brother Don Fernando, and from him, in like case, to pass to his uncle Don Bartholomew, descending always to the nearest male heir; in failure of which it was to pass to the female nearest in lineage to the admiral. He enjoined upon whoever should inherit his estate never to alienate or diminish it, but to endeavor by all means to augment its prosperity and importance. He likewise enjoined upon his heirs to be prompt and devoted at all times, with person and estate, to serve their sovereign and promote the Christian faith. He ordered that Don Diego should devote one-tenth of the revenues which might arise from his estate, when it came to be productive, to the relief of indigent relatives and of other persons in necessity; that, out of the remainder, he should yield certain yearly proportions to his brother Don Fernando, and his uncles Don Bartholomew and Don Diego; and that the part allotted to Don Fernando should be settled upon him and his male heirs in an entailed and unalienable inheritance. Having thus provided for the maintenance and perpetuity of his family and dignities, he ordered that Don Diego, when his estates should be sufficiently productive, should erect a chapel in the island of Hispaniola, which God had given to him so marvelously, at the town of Conception, in the Vega, where masses should be daily performed for the repose of the souls of himself, his father, his mother, his wife, and of all who died in the faith. Another clause recommends to the care of Don Diego, Beatrix Enriquez, the mother of his natural son Fernando. His connection with her had never been sanctioned by matrimony, and either this circumstance, or some neglect of her, seems to have awakened deep compunction in his dying moments. He orders Don Diego to provide for her respectable maintenance; "and let this be done," he adds, "for the discharge

of my conscience, for it weighs heavy on my soul."* Finally he noted with his own hand several minute sums, to be paid to persons at different and distant places, without their being told whence they received them. These appear to have been trivial debts of conscience, or rewards for petty services received in times long past. Among them is one of half a mark of silver to a poor Jew, who lived at the gate of the Jewry, in the city of Lisbon. These minute provisions evince the scrupulous attention to justice in all his dealings, and that love of punctuality in the fulfillment of duties, for which he was remarked. In the same spirit, he gave much advice to his son Diego, as to the conduct of his affairs, enjoining upon him to take every month an account with his own hand of the expenses of his household, and to sign it with his name; for a want of regularity in this, he observed, lost both property and servants, and turned the last into enemies.† His dying bequests were made in presence of a few faithful followers and servants, and among them we find the name of Bartholomeo Fiesco, who had accompanied Diego Mendez in the perilous voyage in a canoe from Jamaica to Hispaniola.

Having thus scrupulously attended to all the claims of affection, loyalty, and justice upon earth, Columbus turned his thoughts to heaven; and having received the holy sacrament, and per-

* Diego, the son of the admiral, notes in his own testament this bequest of his father, and says, that he was charged by him to pay Beatrix Enriquez 10,000 maravedies a-year, which for some time he had faithfully performed; but as he believes that for three or four years previous to her death he had neglected to do so, he orders that the deficiency shall be ascertained and paid to her heirs. Memorial ajustado sobre la propriedad del mayorazgo que fondo D. Christ. Colon. § 245.

† Memorial ajustado, § 248.

formed all the pious offices of a devout Christian, he expired with great resignation, on the day of ascension, the 20th of May, 1506 being about seventy years of age.* His last words were, "*In manus tuas Domine, commendo spiritum meum:*" Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.†

His body was deposited in the convent of St. Francisco, and his obsequies were celebrated with funereal pomp at Valladolid, in the parochial church of Santa Maria de la Antigua. His remains were transported afterwards, in 1513, to the Carthusian monastery of Las Cuevas of Seville, to the chapel of St. Ann or of Santo Christo, in which chapel were likewise deposited those of his son Don Diego, who died in the village of Montalban, on the 23d of February, 1526. In the year 1536 the bodies of Columbus and his son Diego were removed to Hispaniola, and interred in the principal chapel of the cathedral of the city of San Domingo; but even here they did not rest in quiet, having since been again disinterred and conveyed to the Havanna, in the island of Cuba.

We are told that Ferdinand, after the death of Columbus, showed a sense of his merits by ordering a monument to be erected to his memory, on which was inscribed the motto already cited, which had formerly been granted to him by the sovereigns: A CASTILLA Y A LEON NUEVO MUNDO DIO COLON (*To Castile and Leon Columbus gave a new world*). However great an honor a monument may be for a subject to receive, it is certainly but a cheap reward for a sovereign to bestow. As to the motto inscribed upon it, it remains engraved in the memory of mankind, more indelibly than in brass or marble; a record of the great

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 121.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 38. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 108

debt of gratitude due to the discoverer, which the monarch had so faithlessly neglected to discharge.

Attempts have been made in recent days, by loyal Spanish writers, to vindicate the conduct of Ferdinand towards Columbus. They were doubtless well intended, but they have been futile, nor is their failure to be regretted. To screen such injustice in so eminent a character from the reprobation of mankind, is to deprive history of one of its most important uses. Let the ingratitude of Ferdinand stand recorded in its full extent, and endure throughout all time. The dark shadow which it casts upon his brilliant renown, will be a lesson to all rulers, teaching them what is important to their own fame in their treatment of illustrious men.

CHAPTER V.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF COLUMBUS.

In narrating the story of Columbus, it has been the endeavor of the author to place him in a clear and familiar point of view; for this purpose he has rejected no circumstance, however trivial, which appeared to evolve some point of character; and he has sought all kinds of collateral facts which might throw light upon his views and motives. With this view also he has detailed many facts hitherto passed over in silence, or vaguely noticed by historians, probably because they might be deemed instances of error or misconduct on the part of Columbus; but he who paints a great man merely in great and heroic traits, though he may produce a fine picture, will never present a faithful portrait. Great men are compounds of great and little qualities. Indeed, much of their greatness arises from their mastery over the imperfections of their nature, and their noblest actions are sometimes struck forth by the collision of their merits and their defects.

In Columbus were singularly combined the practical and the poetical. His mind had grasped all kinds of knowledge, whether procured by study or observation, which bore upon his theories; impatient of the scanty aliment of the day, "his impetuous ardor," as has well been observed, "threw him into the study of the

fathers of the church; the Arabian Jews, and the ancient geographers;" while his daring but irregular genius, bursting from the limits of imperfect science, bore him to conclusions far beyond the intellectual vision of his contemporaries. If some of his conclusions were erroneous, they were at least ingenious and splendid; and their error resulted from the clouds which still hung over his peculiar path of enterprise. His own discoveries enlightened the ignorance of the age; guided conjecture to certainty, and dispelled that very darkness with which he had been obliged to struggle.

In the progress of his discoveries he has been remarked for the extreme sagacity and the admirable justness with which he seized upon the phenomena of the exterior world. The variations, for instance, of terrestrial magnetism, the direction of currents, the groupings of marine plants, fixing one of the grand climacteric divisions of the ocean, the temperatures changing not solely with the distance to the equator, but also with the difference of meridians: these and similar phenomena, as they broke upon him, were discerned with wonderful quickness of perception, and made to contribute important principles to the stock of general knowledge. This lucidity of spirit, this quick convertibility of facts to principles, distinguish him from the dawn to the close of his sublime enterprise, insomuch that, with all the sallying ardor of his imagination, his ultimate success has been admirably characterized as a "conquest of reflection."*

It has been said that mercenary views mingled with the ambition of Columbus, and that his stipulations with the Spanish court were selfish and avaricious. The charge is inconsiderate and unjust. He aimed at dignity and wealth in the same lofty spirit in which he sought renown; they were to be part and parcel of his

* D. Humboldt. Examen Critique.

achievement, and palpable evidence of its success; they were to arise from the territories he should discover, and be commensurate in importance. No condition could be more just. He asked nothing of the sovereigns but a command of the countries he hoped to give them, and a share of the profits to support the dignity of his command. If there should be no country discovered, his stipulated viceroyalty would be of no avail; and if no revenues should be produced, his labor and peril would produce no gain. If his command and revenues ultimately proved magnificent, it was from the magnificence of the regions he had attached to the Castilian crown. What monarch would not rejoice to gain empire on such conditions? But he did not risk merely a loss of labor, and a disappointment of ambition, in the enterprise;—on his motives being questioned, he voluntarily undertook, and, with the assistance of his coadjutors, actually defrayed one-eighth of the whole charge of the first expedition.

It was, in fact, this rare union already noticed, of the practical man of business with the poetical projector, which enabled him to carry his grand enterprises into effect through so many difficulties; but the pecuniary calculations and cares, which gave feasibility to his schemes, were never suffered to chill the glowing aspirations of his soul. The gains that promised to arise from his discoveries, he intended to appropriate in the same princely and pious spirit in which they were demanded. He contemplated works and achievements of benevolence and religion; vast contributions for the relief of the poor of his native city; the foundations of churches, where masses should be said for the souls of the departed; and armies for the recovery of the holy sepulchre in Palestine. Thus his ambition was truly noble and lofty; instinct with high thought and prone to generous deed.

In the discharge of his office he maintained the state and ceremonial of a viceroy, and was tenacious of his rank and privileges; not from a mere vulgar love of titles, but because he prized them as testimonials and trophies of his achievements: these he jealously cherished as his great rewards. In his repeated applications to the king, he insisted merely on the restitution of his dignities. As to his pecuniary dues and all questions relative to mere revenue, he offered to leave them to arbitration or even to the absolute disposition of the monarch; but not so his official dignities; "these things," said he nobly, "affect my honor." In his testament, he enjoined on his son Diego, and whoever after him should inherit his estates, whatever dignities and titles might afterwards be granted by the king, always to sign himself simply "the admiral," by way of perpetuating in the family its real source of greatness.

His conduct was characterized by the grandeur of his views, and the magnanimity of his spirit. Instead of scouring the newly-found countries, like a grasping adventurer eager only for immediate gain, as was too generally the case with contemporary discoverers, he sought to ascertain their soil and productions, their rivers and harbors: he was desirous of colonizing and cultivating them; of conciliating and civilizing the natives; of building cities; introducing the useful arts; subjecting every thing to the control of law, order, and religion; and thus of founding regular and prosperous empires. In this glorious plan he was constantly defeated by the dissolute rabble which it was his misfortune to command; with whom all law was tyranny, and all order restraint. They interrupted all useful works by their seditions; provoked the peaceful Indians to hostility; and after they had thus drawn down misery and warfare upon their own heads, and

overwhelmed Columbus with the ruins of the edifice he was building, they charged him with being the cause of the confusion.

Well would it have been for Spain had those who followed in the track of Columbus possessed his sound policy and liberal views. The New World, in such cases, would have been settled by pacific colonists, and civilized by enlightened legislators; instead of being overrun by desperate adventurers, and desolated by avaricious conquerors.

Columbus was a man of quick sensibility, liable to great excitement, to sudden and strong impressions, and powerful impulses He was naturally irritable and impetuous, and keenly sensible to injury and injustice; yet the quickness of his temper was counteracted by the benevolence and generosity of his heart. The magnanimity of his nature shone forth through all the troubles of his stormy career. Though continually outraged in his dignity, and braved in the exercise of his command; though foiled in his plans, and endangered in his person by the seditions of turbulent and worthless men, and that too at times when suffering under anxiety of mind and anguish of body sufficient to exasperate the most patient, yet he restrained his valiant and indignant spirit, by the strong powers of his mind, and brought himself to forbear, and reason, and even to supplicate: nor should we fail to notice how free he was from all feeling of revenge, how ready to forgive and forget, on the least signs of repentance and atonement. He has been extolled for his skill in controlling others; but far greater praise is due to him for his firmness in governing himself.

His natural benignity made him accessible to all kinds of pleasurable sensations from external objects. In his letters and journals, instead of detailing circumstances with the technical

precision of a mere navigator, he notices the beauties of nature with the enthusiasm of a poet or a painter. As he coasts the shores of the New World, the reader participates in the enjoyment with which he describes, in his imperfect but picturesque Spanish, the varied objects around him; the blandness of the temperature, the purity of the atmosphere, the fragrance of the air, "full of dew and sweetness," the verdure of the forests, the magnificence of the trees, the grandeur of the mountains, and the limpidity and freshness of the running streams. New delight springs up for him in every scene. He extols each new discovery as more beautiful than the last, and each as the most beautiful in the world; until, with his simple earnestness, he tells the sovereigns, that, having spoken so highly of the preceding islands, he fears that they will not credit him, when he declares that the one he is actually describing surpasses them all in excellence.

In the same ardent and unstudied way he expresses his emotions on various occasions, readily affected by impulses of joy or grief, of pleasure or indignation. When surrounded and overwhelmed by the ingratitude and violence of worthless men, he often, in the retirement of his cabin, gave way to bursts of sorrow, and relieved his overladen heart by sighs and groans. When he returned in chains to Spain, and came into the presence of Isabella, instead of continuing the lofty pride with which he had hitherto sustained his injuries, he was touched with grief and tenderness at her sympathy, and burst forth into sobs and tears.

He was devoutly pious, religion mingled with the whole course of his thoughts and actions, and shone forth, in his most private and unstudied writings. Whenever he made any great discovery, he celebrated it by solemn thanks to God. The voice of prayer and melody of praise rose from his ships when they first beheld

the New World, and his first action on landing was to prostrate himself upon the earth and return thanksgivings. Every evening, the *Salve Regina*, and other vesper hymns, were chanted by his crew, and masses were performed in the beautiful groves bordering the wild shores of this heathen land. All his great enterprises were undertaken in the name of the Holy Trinity, and he partook of the communion previous to embarkation. He was a firm believer in the efficacy of vows and penances and pilgrimages, and resorted to them in times of difficulty and danger. The religion thus deeply seated in his soul diffused a sober dignity and benign composure over his whole demeanor. His language was pure and guarded, and free from all imprecations, oaths, and other irreverent expressions.

It cannot be denied, however, that his piety was mingled with superstition, and darkened by the bigotry of the age. He evidently concurred in the opinion, that all nations which did not acknowledge the Christian faith were destitute of natural rights; that the sternest measures might be used for their conversion, and the severest punishments inflicted upon their obstinacy in unbelief. In this spirit of bigotry he considered himself justified in making captives of the Indians, and transporting them to Spain to have them taught the doctrines of Christianity, and in selling them for slaves if they pretended to resist his invasions. In so doing he sinned against the natural goodness of his character, and against the feelings which he had originally entertained and expressed towards this gentle and hospitable people; but he was goaded on by the mercenary impatience of the crown, and by the sneers of his enemies at the unprofitable result of his enterprises. It is but justice to his character to observe, that the enslavement of the Indians thus taken in battle was at first openly coun-

tenanced by the crown, and that, when the question of right came to be discussed at the entreaty of the queen, several of the most distinguished jurists and theologians advocated the practice; so that the question was finally settled in favor of the Indians solely by the humanity of Isabella. As the venerable bishop Las Casas observes, where the most learned men have doubted, it is not surprising that an unlearned mariner should err.

These remarks, in palliation of the conduct of Columbus, are required by candor. It is proper to show him in connection with the age in which he lived, lest the errors of the times should be considered as his individual faults. It is not the intention of the author, however, to justify Columbus on a point where it is inexcusable to err. Let it remain a blot on his illustrious name, and let others derive a lesson from it.

We have already hinted at a peculiar trait in his rich and varied character; that ardent and enthusiastic imagination which threw a magnificence over his whole course of thought. Herrera intimates that he had a talent for poetry, and some slight traces of it are on record in the book of prophecies which he presented to the Catholic sovereigns. But his poetical temperament is discernible throughout all his writings and in all his actions. It spread a golden and glorious world around him, and tinged every thing with its own gorgeous colors. It betrayed him into visionary speculations, which subjected him to the sneers and cavilings of men of cooler and safer, but more groveling minds. Such were the conjectures formed on the coast of Paria about the form of the earth, and the situation of the terrestrial paradise; about the mines of Ophir in Hispaniola, and the Aurea Chersonesus in Veragua; and such was the heroic scheme of a crusade for the recovery of the holy sepulchre. It mingled with his religion, and

filled his mind with solemn and visionary meditations on mystic passages of the Scriptures, and the shadowy portents of the prophecies. It exalted his office in his eyes, and made him conceive himself an agent sent forth upon a sublime and awful mission, subject to impulses and supernatural intimations from the Deity; such as the voice which he imagined spoke to him in comfort amidst the troubles of Hispaniola, and in the silence of the night on the disastrous coast of Veragua.

He was decidedly a visionary, but a visionary of an uncommon and successful kind. The manner in which his ardent, imaginative, and mercurial nature was controlled by a powerful judgment, and directed by an acute sagacity, is the most extraordinary feature in his character. Thus governed, his imagination, instead of exhausting itself in idle flights, lent aid to his judgment, and enabled him to form conclusions at which common minds could never have arrived, nay, which they could not perceive when pointed out.

To his intellectual vision it was given to read the signs of the times, and to trace, in the conjectures and reveries of past ages, the indications of an unknown world; as soothsayers were said to read predictions in the stars, and to foretell events from the visions of the night. "His soul," observes a Spanish writer "was superior to the age in which he lived. For him was reserved the great enterprise of traversing that sea which had given rise to so many fables, and of deciphering the mystery of his time."*

With all the visionary fervor of his imagination, its fondest dreams fell short of the reality. He died in ignorance of the real grandeur of his discovery. Until his last breath he enter-

* Cladera. Investigaciones historias, p. 43.

tained the idea that he had merely opened a new way to the old resorts of opulent commerce, and had discovered some of the wild regions of the east. He supposed Hispaniola to be the ancient Ophir which had been visited by the ships of Solomon, and that Cuba and Terra Firma were but remote parts of Asia. What visions of glory would have broken upon his mind could he have known that he had indeed discovered a new continent, equal to the whole of the old world in magnitude, and separated by two vast oceans from all the earth hitherto known by civilized man! And how would his magnanimous spirit have been consoled, amidst the afflictions of age and the cares of penury, the neglect of a fickle public, and the injustice of an ungrateful king, could he have anticipated the splendid empires which were to spread over the beautiful world he had discovered; and the nations, and tongues, and languages which were to fill its lands with his renown, and revere and bless his name to the latest posterity!

END OF VOL. II.

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